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## A BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

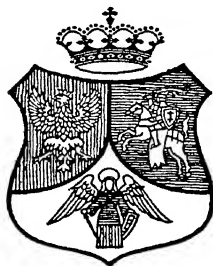


# A BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

BY

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## PREFACE

THIS is not the book of an investigator. It is simply an attempt to present the results of much work already done by others on a difficult and complicated subject, in such a way as to reach and interest the many to whom Poland's great past, as well as her present problems and their wide significance, are practically unknown.

It is impossible to mention all the many authorities whose work has contributed to the preparation of this book, but I must gratefully acknowledge my special debt to Röpell and Caro's *Geschichte Polens*, still the best general history of Poland for the period it covers; to the books and articles of Mr. R. Nisbet Bain on many Slavonic subjects; and to Mr. Robert Howard Lord, without whose authoritative and illuminating work, *The Second Partition of Poland*, much of this book could scarcely have been written.

JULIA SWIFT ORVIS



# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION . . . . .	ix
I. ORIGIN AND EARLY HISTORY: THE ERA OF BEGIN- NINGS, 962-1386 . . . . .	1
II. THE JAGIELLON KINGS: THE ERA OF GREATNESS, 1386-1572 . . . . .	50
III. THE ELECTIVE MONARCHY: THE ERA OF DECLINE, 1572-1763 . . . . .	98
IV. POLISH SOCIETY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY . . . . .	167
V. THE LAST KING OF POLAND: THE ERA OF PARTI- TION, 1763-1795	
1. The First Partition . . . . .	187
2. The National Revival and the Second Par- tition . . . . .	203
3. The Revolution of 1794 and the Third Par- tition . . . . .	231
VI. THE GRAND DUCHY OF WARSAW . . . . .	239
VII. THE "CONGRESS KINGDOM" AND THE REVOLUTION OF 1830 . . . . .	247
VIII. THE REVOLUTION OF 1863 . . . . .	262
IX. POLAND SINCE 1863	
1. Prussian Poland . . . . .	284
2. Russian Poland . . . . .	292
3. Austrian Poland . . . . .	307
X. THE POLES AND THE WAR . . . . .	317
GENEALOGICAL TABLE: THE JAGIELLON KINGS OF POLAND . . . . .	333
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	335
INDEX . . . . .	337





## LIST OF MAPS

POLAND AND LITHUANIA BEFORE THE UNION OF LUBLIN	
1563 . . . . .	50
POLAND: THE PARTITIONS OF 1772, 1793, AND 1795 . . . . .	202
THE GRAND DUCHY OF WARSAW, 1806-1813 . . . . .	242
POLAND IN 1815 . . . . .	252



## INTRODUCTION

ONCE again after a century of oblivion the problem of Poland has become a living question in European politics. The Great War and the rallying of Russia, England, and France to the cause of Serbia, Belgium, and Alsace-Lorraine have brought the whole question of the rights of small nationalities to the fore, and have aroused high hopes of national recognition and autonomous government in the breasts of many peoples, subjected during long generations to the arbitrary and galling rule of alien conquerors.

Nowhere are these hopes stronger than among the Poles. Perhaps also they are nowhere better founded. The Polish question is so much more than a *merely* Polish question, so much more even than a Prussian or a Russian or an Austrian question — as it is often erroneously considered; it is, in fact, a European question of such vital importance, that the Poles are probably right in thinking that, in mere self-defense and for her own purposes, Europe must, now, in her time of crisis, solve this age-long problem in the only possible way by recogniz-

ing Polish nationality and securing for the Poles an autonomous free government. For it is the simple truth that upon its solution depends in large measure the solution of the far greater problem whether the Slav peoples are to maintain an honorable place in the Europe of the future or be crushed out of existence by the advancing might of Pan-Germanism.

Five hundred years ago Poland was already an old state and one of the greatest in Europe, with territories stretching far to the north, east, and south of her homeland, the basin of the river Vistula. From the Baltic southwards to the Carpathians and the Black Sea, from the Oder eastward to the Bug she stretched, a great wedge of plain and river valleys separating eastern or Slavonic Europe from the west.

These possessions, which made her incontestably the greatest power in eastern Europe, were won and held by her only after a life-and-death struggle against the great champion of Germanism in the Baltic lands, the Order of the Teutonic Knights. This semi-monastic military order—one of the many which came into existence during the Crusades—was engaged, under papal sanction, in conquering, colonizing, and forcibly Christianizing the Baltic seaboard. By 1386 the whole Baltic coast, from Pome-

rania to the Gulf of Finland, was in its hands. Poland was thus cut off from the sea and her very existence threatened. In this crisis she turned to her neighbor on the east, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and offered the crown of Poland to the reigning Grand Duke, Jagiello, on condition of his marrying Hedwiga, the last of Poland's ruling house. Hedwiga had made very different plans. She was, in fact, already betrothed to her cousin, a prince of the House of Habsburg, and it was only after her nobles had shut her up and threatened to starve her that she yielded to their wishes, and married Jagiello, who became King of Poland under the title of Wladislaus II.

This union was of enormous advantage to Poland. Lithuania was a large and powerful state, which had come into existence for the purpose of preserving the Lithuanian tribes from extinction at the hands of the Knights. Occupying originally the valley of the river Niemen, Lithuania had taken advantage of the weakness of Russia under Tartar rule to overrun and annex the vast territories of southern and western Russia — Black, White, and Little Russia, including the great basin of the Dnieper River. Her Grand Dukes also at this time were rulers of exceptional ability, mighty

in war and wise in peace, and under the leadership of Wladislaus II and his six successors Poland became and remained for two hundred years the mightiest state in Europe, both in territory and prestige.

Twenty years after the union, in 1410, the Knights received their death-blow in the great battle of Grünewald, near Tannenberg, and fifty years later their territories were divided, Poland annexing West Prussia, which gave her once more an outlet on the Baltic and control of the mouths of the Vistula, while East Prussia, the territory originally occupied by the Knights, was left to them only as a fief of the Polish Crown. Under the successors of Wladislaus, and especially as a result of the wise and prosperous reign of his second son, Casimir IV, the many different national elements making up the state were fused and consolidated into a homogeneous political unit. Under Sigismund II, the last of the race, Poland and Lithuania, hitherto two states under a common king, were united (by the Union of Lublin in 1569) into a single state, with a common Diet, a common religion, and a common nationality.

With the extinction of the Jagiellon dynasty in 1572 Poland started on the downward path. The monarchy, always elective in theory, now

became so in fact. A blind and selfish aristocracy, the ruling class in the country, obsessed with the ideal of individual liberty, guarded so jealously their mediæval privileges of the *liberum veto* — the ridiculous and impossible right of each individual to kill legislation by his veto, and the *Pacta conventa*, a humiliating and paralyzing capitulary imposed upon the kings at election — that any governmental action became practically impossible, and Poland sank deeper and deeper into anarchy, inaction, and decay, and this at the very time when other European states all about her were rapidly ridding themselves of their mediævalism and building up strong centralized modern governments. Small wonder that Poland soon became the tool of foreign Powers working out their own aggrandizement! During the two hundred years of her elective kingship Poland had, among others, one French, one Hungarian, three Swedish, and two German (Saxon) kings, each one put upon her throne by the intrigues of their governments working upon the cupidity and poverty of the Polish nobility. That the kingdom remained territorially intact and outwardly powerful for so long was due almost solely to the fact that Poland's neighbors were not quite ready to despoil her. That they would

ultimately do so unless she changed her ways was clearly realized and frankly predicted by more than one of her rulers. Stephen Batory, the Hungarian King, who ruled from 1575 to 1586, said: "Poles, you owe your preservation, not to laws, for you know them not, nor to government, for you respect it not; you owe it to nothing but chance."

And again, nearly a century later, John Casimir, the last of the Swedish rulers of Poland, before he abdicated the throne in despair made the following remarkable prediction: "God grant that I may be a false prophet, but I warn you that unless you take steps to heal the diseases of the State, the Republic will become the prey of its neighbors. . . . The Powers will prefer to partition Poland rather than possess it as a whole under the anarchical conditions of to-day." And yet for something more than a century longer Poland preserved at least a nominal independence, and the gloom of the period of her sure decay was lighted up by more than one brilliant political episode. Such were King John Sobieski's saving of Vienna from the Turks, and the Russian adventure of Sigismund III, as a result of which he reigned for two years as Czar of Muscovy.

By the end of the eighteenth century Poland's



neighbors were ready to deal with her, and she was torn to pieces, her independence destroyed, and her territories divided among her assassins, Austria, Russia, and Prussia, Russia taking by far the larger share. But though her body politic was cut to pieces, the soul of Poland did not die. On the contrary, ever since her destruction as a state her feeling as a people has been growing stronger, until to-day, there is no national group where the national consciousness is stronger or where patriotism flames higher than among the Poles.

Until recently the Poles have regarded successful revolution against the Czar as the only path to freedom, but since the Revolution of 1863 — the last of a series which always ended in failure and were followed almost automatically and necessarily by ruthless repression — a wiser feeling has been evolved. The visionary and the idealist have given place as Polish leaders to practical statesmen who have seen and have taught their countrymen that the only possibility for Polish autonomy is through a friendly understanding with Russia. Moreover, they have believed for some time that such an understanding was not so remote a possibility as the existing relations between the two peoples would seem to imply.

As the scope of the Pan-Germanist policy gradually revealed itself to Europe, and its menace to the whole Slav world began to be understood, Poles were among the first to recognize the importance of Poland in the approaching struggle of the Slav peoples against German hegemony. The location of Poland made it inevitable that on her territory must be fought the first battles of the German advance on Russia; in Poland must be erected the first lines of defense of the great Slav Empire against Pan-Germanism, and the Polish leaders realized that when the crisis came, Russia would pay a heavy price to have behind those defenses a loyal Slav population looking to the Czar as the leader of the Slav cause. They have, therefore, made it quite clearly understood during the past few years that a proper recognition of their autonomy within the Empire was the price they asked for reconciliation with Russia and loyal support of the Czar's Government.

On the other hand, it has long been obvious to enlightened Russians that the Russification policy in Poland was not only a mistake, but also a failure, and that such ends as it achieved were to the advantage neither of Poland nor of Russia, but of Germany — a conviction

strongly supported by the fact that for a hundred years German diplomacy at Petrograd has worked steadily against Polish autonomy and against the reconciliation of Poland and Russia.

These considerations make it understandable that when, in August of 1914, scarcely two weeks after the German declaration of war against Russia, the Grand Duke Nicholas issued a proclamation to the Poles, offering them friendship on their own terms of freedom in language, religion, and government, it was taken quite seriously in Poland, — though scoffed at suspiciously in other quarters, — and representatives of the leading democratic parties in Poland, the Democratic National Party, the Polish Progressive Party, the Realist Party, and the Polish Progressive Union, met in Warsaw and issued a manifesto in response to the Grand Duke's proclamation in which they said: "The Representatives welcome the Proclamation . . . as an act of foremost political importance, and implicitly believe that upon the termination of the war the promises uttered in that proclamation will be formally fulfilled, that the dreams of their forefathers will be realized. . . . The blood of Poland's sons, shed in united combat against

the Germans, will serve as a sacrifice upon the altar of her Resurrection."

What the real significance of these documents may be and what Fate holds in store for Poland are matters that the future alone can reveal. Meanwhile, however, the anti-German feeling that Poles and Russians shared before the war — almost the only feeling they had in common! — has been enormously increased by German policy since the war began. Austria also issued a proclamation to the Poles before her invasion of the Russian provinces, offering them independence under Austrian and German protection. But when the Polish territories came into German hands the promise was apparently forgotten, and a policy of Germanization of the harshest sort was immediately inaugurated.

But it is scarcely possible to expect Germany to do otherwise. Recognition of Polish autonomy in the Russian provinces would mean, not only abandoning the policy of Germanization pursued consistently and with heavy cost for a century in her own Polish provinces, but also reversing the general policy by which, ever since the time of the Great Elector, the Hohenzollerns have amalgamated and absorbed alien populations and made Germany a unit. To-day

as always, it is only by Germanizing the Slavs that Germanism can advance at their expense. If she cannot Germanize the Poles, not only can Germany not advance beyond them, but their nationalism constitutes a very serious menace to the loyalty of the Poles in her own provinces. The problem of Poland is thus a vital one for Germany.

It is no less so for Russia. Russia aspires to be the protector and leader of the great Slav race, the champion of the rights of Slav nationalities. Yet the most numerous of Slav nations, and the only one toward whom she has entire freedom of action, the Poles, have received nothing but repression at her hands. If Russian leadership of the Southern Slavs is to be in any sense a real leadership based on mutual confidence, she must show her good faith by first putting her own house in order and making her policy consistent by doing justice to the Poles.



# A BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

## CHAPTER I

### ORIGIN AND EARLY HISTORY THE ERA OF BEGINNINGS, 962-1386

#### I. 962-1139

WHEN the light of history first dawned upon them, the Slav ancestors of the Polish people were dwelling in the valley of the Vistula. How they came there and where they came from are largely matters of conjecture. The real history of Poland in any proper sense begins with the tenth century. For the years before that date we have no reliable historical material, though legends abound as to the origin and early life of the Polish state.

From what scanty material we have it seems probable that the Slavs, an Indo-European people coming from Asia — we do not know when or why — were settled, about the second century A.D., on the Danube, were driven thence by some stronger people, perhaps the Romans, and were later at home for some centuries on the slopes and plateaus of the Carpathians. Once

## 2 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

again they were driven out, this time by the Avars in the seventh century, and, fleeing north, south, and west before their conquerors, scattered themselves all over central and south-western Europe. One large group, pushing westward, were stopped by the Germans on the Elbe, which thus marked their western boundary. They are known as the Western Slavs, for obvious reasons, and they occupied the territory between the Elbe and the Bug, the Baltic, and the Carpathians. The Poles were part of this group, while the Russians, or Eastern Slavs, their age-long foes, formed a group just next them on the east, in the valleys of the Dnieper and its tributaries.

In the ninth century the invasion of another Asiatic people, the Magyars, and their permanent settlement on the plains of Hungary, thrust a wedge right into Slavdom, effectively separated the Slavs of the north and those of the south, and resulted in an entirely separate historical development of the two regions. It is only in the last two centuries that the expansion of Russia to the south and the revival of a strong race-consciousness, as shown in the Pan-Slavic movement, have brought the Southern Slavs once more into contact with their brethren of the north.



## THE ERA OF BEGINNINGS 3

The Eastern Slavs, or the Russians, settled along the upper reaches of the Dnieper, very early opened up a vigorous trade with the Scandinavians to the north of them, and later pushed down the river to the Black Sea and traded with Constantinople. The great barren steppe or prairie bordering the Black Sea on the north, which formed Russia's southeastern boundary, was a "No Man's Land," a great highway along which, through the ages, the Asiatic peoples followed one another in long procession to the west, and by which they returned east again. Over it had wandered, from time immemorial, nomads of all races and countries, and Russian trade needed constant protection against these peoples, all fiercer and more warlike than themselves. This protection was supplied by the Varangians, a band of Norsemen, who, under the leadership of their chief, Rurik, came into the Dnieper Valley in the ninth century, and, conquering the Slav people already there, built up the first Russian state, with its capital at Kiev.

The evidence for the origin of the Polish state is not so clear. The Western Slavs, spread over the country between the Elbe and the Bug, lived probably in separate, half-nomadic tribal groups until pressure from the

## 4 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

Germans on the west obliged them to combine for defense. The Poles, whose name signifies "Plain-dwellers" or "Lowlanders," occupied the region of the Wartha, and according to the legends, it was a Polish peasant, Piast, who, drawing the tribes together, founded the Polish state and established a dynasty that ruled in Poland for five hundred years. The Poles have always claimed to be the purest of Slav peoples, but it is probable that in Poland as in Russia there was a strong Norse element. The Vikings were all along the Baltic seaboard at this time, sailing up the rivers, plundering and taking possession of the lands as they pleased, and there is at least indirect evidence of their penetration by way of the rivers into the Polish plain.

In the tenth century, when Duke Mieczyslaw I, the first non-legendary ruler of Poland, supposedly the great-grandson of Piast, emerges into history, his state comprised the greater part of the Slav tribes east of the Oder, west of the Bug, north of the Carpathians, and south of the Netze River. Though at different times in succeeding centuries the Polish state extended its rule far to the east and to the west of these lines, yet it is the territory within them that is properly Poland. Whenever there has

been a Polish state this has been its nucleus, and, independently of political conditions, this territory has remained the permanent home of the Polish race. Here, in spite of all efforts at Russification and Germanization, the people are to-day, as always, predominantly Polish. Outside these lines this is not true. The Carpathians form a natural boundary to the south, beyond which the Poles never penetrated, and the marshes north of the Netze and in Masovia made advance in this direction difficult, too difficult to achieve in the face of steady German opposition. To the east and to the west, however, the land lies open and unprotected and has lured the Poles to conquest when they were strong, exposed them to German and Russian aggression when they were weak, and resulted in a constant shifting of their eastern and western frontiers.

In the tenth century the Germans were engaged in a great forward movement on their eastern frontier. As elsewhere, when directed against heathen people, this was a crusading as well as a conquering and colonizing movement. Christian missionaries preceded and accompanied the Imperial armies, and the men of the armies themselves were also soldiers of the Cross, who, sword in hand, compelled their

## 6 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

heathen brethren to believe and be baptized, and thus save their lives as well as their souls.

It was to oppose this advancing Germandom and Christendom that the union of the Poles into a single state had come about, but when Duke Mieczyslaw came to the head of the state, he found the odds against him in the struggle. That the Germans had gained a real influence in the country is seen by the fact that they had set up a bishopric at Gnesen, under the Archbishop of Magdeburg, and that Mieczyslaw held some of his lands under Imperial suzerainty. Unable to oppose both Germanism and Christianity, he became a Christian in the hope of saving his state from absorption by the Germans. Putting away his heathen wives, he married a Christian princess of Bohemia, the Princess Dobrawa, and set to work to bring his people to his new faith. As a good deal of preliminary work had probably already been done, and as Mieczyslaw had the help of Jordan, German Bishop of Gnesen, and of St. Adalbert, Bishop of Prague, Poland soon became a Christian state, at least outwardly.

With this same aim of maintaining the independence of Poland, the Duke made friends with the Germans. After the death of Dobrawa he married a German wife, and even took

sides with the Empire against the Slavs west of the Oder. In return, in the latter part of his reign, he received German help in a war against Bohemian encroachment on his territories. At his death Poland had emerged from its heathen obscurity, and had become a recognized part of the Western Christian world. This is quaintly symbolized in the old legend which made Mieczyslaw blind until his seventh year, when he received full sight.

\* According to the Slavonic custom, Mieczyslaw divided his lands among his sons. But the eldest dreamed of a great, united Poland, and in order to realize his dream, drove out his brothers and ruled alone over the whole kingdom, as Boleslaus I (992-1025). His dispossessed brothers roused their neighbors against him, and he was obliged to fight on all his frontiers. The wars which filled his reign, however, were not all defensive. He desired to free Poland from all dependence on the Emperor, from whom as suzerain he held his lands west of the Wartha, and also he dreamed of conquering Bohemia and uniting it with Poland in a great Slav Empire. He thought the amalgamation of the two peoples would be easy, on account of the likeness of the two languages.

For fifteen years he fought the combined

## 8 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

forces of Bohemia and the Emperor Henry II for these purposes, and in the end gained his freedom from Imperial control and annexed the Bohemian provinces of Moravia, Silesia, and Cracow to his territories. He was not able, however, to accomplish the union of Bohemia and Poland. For a year, indeed, he held and ruled Bohemia, but he was not strong enough to keep it without the Emperor's sanction, and Henry would acknowledge his claim only on conditions of Imperial dependence which Boleslaus refused to accept. When this plan failed, he made his peace with the King of Bohemia, and tried to get him to unite with Poland in forming a league of Slav states against the Germans. This also failed, but this early attempt at Pan-Slavism shows that even in the eleventh century the sure instinct of a great Polish leader recognized in Germany the abiding danger to Slav independence, and saw in united opposition the only safety for Slavdom.

After he had finished his western campaigns, Boleslaus made an expedition into Russia, in order to replace on the throne of Kiev his son-in-law, Sviatopolk, expelled by the sons of Vladimir the Great. He was unable to accomplish it, however, as the country was against Sviatopolk. Shortly before his death, Boles-

laus took the title of "King," which he was the first of his line to bear.

From the beginning of his reign, Boleslaus saw the importance of having the support of the Church in his project of independence from the Empire. He desired the independence of the Polish Church as at once a step toward, and a guaranty of, the independence of the Polish state. He made Gnesen a great shrine, by placing there the relics of St. Adalbert, the martyred Bishop of Prague, which relics he bought from the Prussians, by whom St. Adalbert had been murdered when he went among them to preach the Gospel. Shortly after, in the year 1000, the Emperor Otto III paid a visit of piety to the shrine of the saint, who was his old friend as well, and Boleslaus got him on this occasion to raise the See of Gnesen to metropolitan rank, with jurisdiction over the three bishoprics of Cracow, Breslau, and Kolberg, thus freeing these Polish sees from dependence on Magdeburg. In his internal as well as in his foreign policy, Boleslaus showed himself a great ruler. He founded churches, endowed monasteries and schools, built roads, and encouraged commerce with all the neighboring states. In order to increase the wealth and prosperity of the country, he settled pris-

## 10 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

oners of war on the land, gave them their freedom, and set them to work to clear the forest, plant the land, and make themselves into prosperous colonists. The King also protected the poor and the powerless from the oppression of the nobility, and exacted the strictest and most implicit obedience from high and low alike. Though genial and kindly with his friends and associates, he was stern to the evil-doer and to those who crossed his will. The strength of the ruler's personality was the measure of good government in those primitive days. The great nobles struggled unceasingly for the right to rob and to exploit their peasants, and only the strong arm of a strong king held them back. The old chroniclers speak often of the warm affection in which Boleslaus was held by his people, over whom he spread the protection of his justice.

Because he made his kingdom really independent of German control both in Church and State, Boleslaus is often called its real founder. Though the Germans tried to ignore this independence, and for centuries continued to demand, and sometimes got, the recognition of their sovereignty over Polish lands, it was never really effective, and Poland remained for centuries what Boleslaus had made her, "the



unconquered kernel of Western Slavdom." Germany had indeed succeeded in Christianizing Poland, but she had failed to conquer her, which was the ultimate purpose of the conversion.

The political organization of the kingdom over which Boleslaus ruled was very simple. Class distinctions had already come into existence. All men except the slaves taken in war were free and equal before the law, but there was a distinction between the *szlachta*, or landed nobility, and the *kmeten* or simple freemen, who possessed no land, but worked the land belonging to some member of the nobility, and paid him for it both in service and in produce. Originally, in all probability, the *kmeten* also were landowners, and there was simply the one free class, but before the time of Boleslaus the natural inequalities among men and the pressure of economic necessity had created the difference. Military service was required of all, the *szlachta* on horseback and the *kmeten* on foot, and the constant wars, which were so impoverishing, depressed the poorer nobles oftentimes to the *kmeten* class. Each war meant more slaves and more *kmeten*, but in spite of this the nobles remained for centuries the most numerous as well as the

most important — the only *really* important part of the nation. All nobles were of the same rank, and all classes were governed by the king directly, and paid tribute directly to him. The feudal system with its divided sovereignty was never introduced into Poland. From the earliest times some nobles were more important than others, but they became so, undoubtedly, through that personal initiative which differentiates one man from another in even the most democratic society. Ability to lead in war was probably the basis of most early superiority, as war was their chief occupation and the main element in their lives. The influence of the Germans undoubtedly hastened this development of the higher nobility, the so-called magnates or *pans* of later centuries.

The district, which was the unit of local government in early Poland, and which, through its assembly of the inhabitants and its local magistrate, managed its own local affairs, was the oldest institution among the Poles, and was probably based on the original division of the land among the tribes. It was an institution far older than the princely power, was common to all Slav peoples, and was thoroughly democratic, as were all the early Slav institutions. Throughout the country, in the center of a

district or of a group of several districts, strong places or castles were built for defense, and served as places of refuge in time of invasion, as well as administrative centers. Over each castle was a Castellan, who in time of war led the people of his district, and in peace dispensed justice and looked after the king's interests, collecting his tribute, overseeing the cultivation of his lands, and other matters of a similar sort.

The great kingdom which Boleslaus had gathered together was not destined to last. His son Mieczyslaw II, a weak prince, reigned only nine years. Upon his death the government devolved upon his widow, Queen Rixa, as regent for their minor son Casimir. The Queen was a German, a relative of the Emperor, desirous of restoring the German influence in Poland, which country she neither liked nor understood. She gave all the important positions to Germans, and governed with such entire disregard of Polish customs and Polish interests that after a few years the nobles revolted, and she was obliged to flee to Germany, taking her son and the public treasure with her. The country, thus deprived of its leaders, fell into anarchy and civil war. Everywhere the peasants, oppressed and exploited by the nobles during the weak rule of Mieczyslaw and

## 14 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

Rixā, now rose against their oppressors, aided in many cases by those colonies of prisoners of war which Boleslaus had established. In many communities, where Christianity formed only a thin official veneer over the old paganism, the people rose against the new faith, which was regarded more or less as a German innovation and an instrument of oppression. They pillaged and destroyed the churches and killed the clergy. The external enemies of Poland also, Russians, Prussians, and Bohemians, taking advantage of her defenseless position, seized the moment to invade her territories, and destroyed what little of value the ravages of civil war had spared. They burned villages and towns, killing or carrying off the inhabitants, so that great tracts of country were entirely depopulated and made into a desert. In all this desolation only one leader showed himself able to protect his territory against aggression. This chief was Maslav of Masovia, who made the marshes of his country a refuge for the persecuted of other states, and thereby built up a domination for himself which it was found hard to destroy. Finally, after five years of this anarchy, the young Casimir was recalled to his kingdom, which he ruled with wisdom for sixteen years, restoring order,

rebuilding towns and churches, and insuring peace with Russia by marrying Mary, the sister of the Grand Prince of Kiev. He was able, however, to do but little in the way of winning back lost territories.]

His son, Boleslaus II, called the Dauntless, was primarily a soldier, eager to fight for any and every cause, but he was a bad ruler, a robber of citizens, an oppressor of the poor. He became, however, the champion of dispossessed princes, of whom this turbulent age furnished many, and spent long years fighting to restore to their thrones the rulers of Hungary, of Russia, and of Bohemia. The long wars kept the King and his soldiers away from Poland during many years, and the story that is told of internal conditions during this absence shows only too plainly that Poland was but very slightly Christianized and civilized, and that it was very easy for her to drop back into pagan and barbarous ways of life.

It is said that the wives of the soldiers, deserted by their husbands for war and the pleasures of foreign cities, especially Kiev, where the voluptuous life of the East had made a strong appeal to their senses, had very generally consoled themselves with other lovers, some of them their own slaves. Rumors of this

## 16 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

situation reaching the soldiers, they had rushed home, without permission from the King, to punish the unfaithful wives and their servile seducers. A civil war resulted, in which even the women took part, often fighting for their lovers against their husbands. In the midst of the struggle, the King appeared with the few troops faithful to him, and meted out punishment to all, slaves, women, and renegade soldiers alike. So terrible was his vengeance that Stanislaus, Bishop of Cracow, threatened him with excommunication if he did not cease his bloody work. The King, in a rage, rushed into the church and stabbed and killed the Bishop before the high altar. At this the nobles rose in a body, and drove him from his throne and his kingdom, the Pope excommunicated him, and, visiting the sins of the father upon the children, excluded his sons from the succession. This action was especially significant as it was the first time that the Church had come into political importance in Poland. Some authorities believe that the quarrel between Bishop Stanislaus and the King was the result of political differences, that the Bishop had joined an aristocratic party which was struggling to reduce the power of the King in its own interests; certainly the exile of Boleslaus greatly strength-

ened the nobles, but the kingly power was still so great that the [King's brother, Wladislaus Herman, succeeded him without protest or question. Wladislaus was not allowed, however, by the Pope, to call himself King, but only Duke, of Poland.]

Wladislaus, himself quite incapable of ruling, put the whole kingly power into the hands of a dishonest and unworthy favorite, who ruled so badly that finally the sons of Wladislaus led a revolt which drove him from the country.

The death of Wladislaus Herman for a time increased internal difficulties. An illegitimate son of Wladislaus contested the throne with Boleslaus III, the legitimate successor, and involved Boleslaus in a long warfare, external as well as internal, because all of his neighbors, Prussians, Pomeranians, Bohemians, and Germans, eager for his territory, seized the opportunity of the contested succession to invade his borders. Boleslaus conquered them all, and reunited Silesia and Pomerania to Poland. With the Emperor Henry V he signed a peace which was sealed by Boleslaus's marriage with Henry's sister, and the latter years of his reign were devoted to the work of re-Christianizing his people, who during the preceding reigns had shown so plainly how slight an

## 18 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

impression the principles of their religion had made upon their lives.

But though Boleslaus III had been able to reconquer provinces and maintain Poland's independence against the Empire, the long period of disorder following the death of Mieczyslaw II had enormously weakened the prestige and power of the monarchy, and had strengthened proportionately that of the nobility and the clergy, which increased rapidly during the years of confusion. When, just before his death in 1138, Boleslaus III divided his territory among his four sons, he put an end to the unity of Poland for two hundred years. Though nominally the kingship was in the hands of his eldest son, Wladislaus, Duke of Cracow, the alienation of so much of his territory, in addition to other circumstances, made his control over his brothers purely nominal, and began the so-called "Partitional Period," which lasted for two hundred years, during which the territory and the sovereignty of Poland were divided and redivided into many independent but weak and small principalities, constantly warring with one another. During this period all sense of Poland's unity as a state was lost, her weakness exposed her to constant aggression from without, and neces-



sitated an entire reorganization, both external and internal, when in 1320 a strong Prince became Duke of Cracow, and once more united the Polish lands.

Boleslaus I had had a very definite policy of Slav union and Slav advance against the Germans, and in pursuance of this idea had pushed the limits of his state westward and northward to the Elbe and the Baltic. After his death this statesmanlike policy was given up, and no one of his descendants showed any practical appreciation of the vital necessity of the possession of all the territories within these limits, if Poland was to have a defensible frontier against German aggression, and was to remain the greatest of central European states which Boleslaus had made her.

The reign of the German Emperor Henry IV (1050-1106), when Germany was weakened by her great internal struggle against the Papacy, offered the most favorable opportunity to the Poles to reconquer Pomerania and the Western Slavs, and thus consolidate the state. Had they used it their whole future would have been different. But no ruler of vision and power arose from the confusion and difficulties of the period, and nothing was done. So when, a century later, the Germans had settled their

## 20 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

internal difficulties and were ready to begin another eastward movement, the Poles were at their mercy. Their opportunity to become a western European state was gone, never to return. Henceforth they were obliged to turn their ambitions toward the east.

### 2. 1139-1320

When Boleslaus III divided his lands among his four sons, with suzerainty over his brothers in the hands of the eldest, he was following an old Slav custom, common to both Poland and Russia. The idea at the bottom of this custom was that the kingdom belonged, not to the eldest son of the reigning monarch, but to the whole princely family, and that the senior member of the family, by virtue of his seniority, exercised a certain fatherly authority over the others, which was shown by his possession of the capital and other chief places of the kingdom. He was bound, however, to provide for the younger members of the family, and was thus obliged to carve up his kingdom into ever smaller and smaller bits, as the generations multiplied. According to this theory, the territorial divisions were merely temporal arrangements, lasting only during the lifetime of a single prince, and were not hereditary in the

family of any occupant, but when he died, and his eldest relative (not usually his son, but a brother, or uncle, or cousin) succeeded him, an entirely new apportionment of the kingdom among the members of the family took place, the more desirable provinces going to the older members, the less desirable to the younger, in a regular order of succession. This same process went on within the provinces assigned to each of the major princes, and similarly all the way down the princely line, as long as territories remained big enough to subdivide, and resulted in very general dislocation all over the country.

It will be readily seen that this theory, when put in practice in a state of any considerable size, would encounter many difficulties. It took no account of that strong attachment to their particular bit of native soil that is so dominant a trait in all peoples, especially those engaged in agriculture, and which makes them prefer a poorer piece of ground upon which they have grown up to a far better one that is strange. From the first, therefore, the rearrangements following the death of each prince were vigorously opposed, and the attempt was constantly made to substitute primogeniture for seniority, as the basis of succession. The influence of the Church as well as of the German political

## 22 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

system, was, of course, in this direction, and neither side ever lacked for champions ready to take up arms in its defense. The result was unceasing civil war, from one end of the country to the other.

In Russia it resulted in such weakness that the princes were unable to defend themselves against the attacks of the savage Polovstui on their southeastern frontier, and were obliged to abandon their territories, including their capital, Kiev, the "mother of Russian cities," with all its splendors and its traditions, to the barbarians, and to emigrate far to the north-east and to the southwest, and there, in better protected regions, to begin a new political life.

In Poland the anarchy lasted two hundred years, from the death of Boleslaus III in 1139, until Wladislaus Lokietek (1319-1333) established once more the unity of the monarchy. During those two hundred years events of far-reaching importance had taken place. As has been said above, when Boleslaus III died, he left his kingdom divided among his four sons. Wladislaus, the eldest, had Cracow, now the capital of the country, Little Poland, Silesia, and Pomerania. To Boleslaus he left Masovia and Cujavia. To Mieczyslaw Great Poland, and to Henry, his fourth son, Sandomir. The

youngest son, Casimir, received nothing from his father, but at the death of his brother, Henry, a few years later, he succeeded to Sandomir.

Wladislaus II was not at all content with his partial sovereignty. His wife, Agnes, a German, ambitious, and unsympathetic with Polish ways, desired to introduce the German feudal system, and she urged her husband to dispossess his brothers and rule alone over a great kingdom as his father had done. As Wladislaus was much older than his brothers, being a man of thirty, while they were all three children under twelve, it seemed not a difficult thing to do. The nobles and clergy, however, whose powers were far greater in a divided weak state than in a strong, united one, rallied to the support of the minor brothers, and a long civil war followed, in which finally Wladislaus was not only defeated but driven from his own possessions. He and his wife also were excommunicated by the Pope, because they had used barbarian and Russian troops against their own people. Wladislaus went to Germany, got the assistance of the Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa, who accompanied him back to Poland at the head of an Imperial army, and attempted to reseat Wladislaus on his throne. But the

## 24 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

expedition did not accomplish its purpose. Some years after, Boleslaus IV, who had taken the throne after the exile of his brother, made a treaty by which the sons of Wladislaus were allowed to take possession of Silesia (which, as stated above, formed part of the share of the kingdom which Boleslaus III had given to their father) on condition of renouncing all claim to the throne of Cracow. This line of princes, feeling themselves unjustly excluded from their rights by the Poles, and closely connected with Germany by marriage and other association, gradually became Germanized and alienated from Poland. Silesia became known as a German province, with distinctly German interests, long before its separation from Poland was officially recognized in 1340. It is only in the last fifty years, since 1870, that there has come about a revival of Polish nationalism in this province.

After the death of Boleslaus, his son, Leszek, inherited Masovia and Cujavia, but Boleslaus's brother, Mieczyslaw III, took the throne of Cracow. He tried to restore the royal power, but only succeeded in making himself so unpopular by his tyranny that he was driven out by the nobles and clergy, who made his brother, Casimir, the youngest of the sons of Boleslaus III,

ruler in his place. By the death within a few years of his nephew, Leszek, son of Boleslaus IV, Casimir came into possession of Masovia and Cujavia, and thus ruled over a far larger territory than any of his brothers. Two senior lines, that of Wladislaus II and that of Mieczyslaw III, were thus excluded from the throne, and for a long period of years constantly disputed the succession with the descendants of Casimir, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. But in the main the line of Casimir remained the dominant one, probably because it was supported by the clergy] who, during all this period, were growing strong just in proportion as the princely power grew weak. The active part played by the clergy in political affairs, with the very important privileges and immunities for their order which resulted from it, is indeed the great outstanding characteristic of this period. It was through the Church that there came into Poland those Western and German elements which, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, destroyed the primitive organization of the Polish state, and transformed the life of the Polish people.) It is therefore necessary to consider the position of the Church in some detail.

The great reform in the Roman Catholic

## 26 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

Church started by the monk Hildebrand, afterwards Pope Gregory VII, in the latter part of the eleventh century, had transformed the inner life of the Church in western Europe, and had also greatly strengthened its external position. Hildebrand's theory of the Church was that it was the representative of God's power on earth, and therefore the spiritual ruler of the world, supreme over kings as over the humblest of their subjects. To make this theory a reality, he saw it was necessary first to reform the clergy, to make them able, eager, and devoted workers in the cause, showing in their lives as in their words the power of the life of the spirit; and secondly, to acquire such governmental powers for the Church that she should be practically independent of the state, should form, indeed, a little state within the state, with her own law, her own courts, her own sources of revenue, and with the power of this independence should be able to curb the savage passions and hold in check the rapacity, the lawlessness, and the cruelty of the mediæval princes.

It was a great ideal, and perhaps it is needless to say that it was never completely realized. But it came near enough to success to make the Church very powerful, greatly to raise the



whole level of the clerical life, and to produce not a few saints and martyrs whose holy lives burned like beacons in the darkness of a violent and barbarous world.

It was not until the end of the twelfth century, nearly a hundred years after their introduction to western Europe, that the influence of these reforms reached Poland. At that time Poland had a married clergy, the churches were the hereditary property of the priests, and the state had entire legal and governmental control over the clergy as over all other parts of the population. Pope Innocent III, the greatest of all the champions of papal and clerical power, was much interested in Poland, and took active and energetic steps to bring the Polish Church into line with the rest of Western Christendom. The political disorder in Poland, just at the time when his attention was turned toward her, offered him a unique opportunity. He found the German clergy very ready to help, and the Polish clergy, though they opposed the papal ideas at first, came later to understand the Pope's purpose, saw its advantages for them, and coöperated gladly. The religious feeling, so characteristic of the age in western Europe, also showed itself in Poland, in the response of princes and

people to the quickened zeal and the new demands of the Church. It resulted, not only in the foundation of schools and monasteries and the endowment of churches, but also in the granting by all the princes of countless immunities to the clergy in their duchies. "Because a house dedicated to the highest God must not be subject to the laws of earthly princes," was the beginning of many a document in which twelfth and thirteenth century princes freed great religious foundations from dependence on themselves. And not infrequently they closed with these or similar significant words: "This is done for the salvation of our own souls and of the souls of our forefathers."

By 1250 by far the greater part of the clergy were subject exclusively to clerical courts, were freed from the dues and services which they had previously paid to their princes, and the beneficed clergy had the right to hold courts for the peasantry who lived and worked on their estates. The election of bishops and abbots also, and the conferring of benefices, formerly in the hands of the king, were now entirely in the hands of the clergy. The Church was thus practically free from all kingly or princely government. This system of immu-

nity was a German practice, and its introduction into Poland was the first break in the old Polish constitution, by which the king ruled, and ruled directly, all classes of his people.

German colonization was another element which brought about great changes in the constitution. All during this and succeeding periods German colonization of the Polish lands was going steadily on. Quietly and without ostentation a steady stream of immigrants flowed across the border, settled in Polish territory, and began to live there their essentially German lives. Sometimes the stream was swollen, sometimes it ran almost dry, but it never completely stopped, and its existence is one of the factors of first importance in Polish history. Among these colonists the clergy were always numerous, and they were among the first to encourage colonization and to profit by it in other classes. The monasteries in Poland were very largely branch houses. Many of them accepted only Germans; others only a minority of Poles; while among the secular clergy, and also in the schools, Germans were very numerous. They used their influence to get German peasants to come and settle on their lands, and the excellent terms which they offered — personal freedom, hereditary right to their lands,

## 30 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

no dues for the first few years, and very moderate ones thereafter — made the German peasants eager to come. The princes, seeing that they were good colonists, welcomed them; and partly as a matter of convenience, partly because the colonists demanded it, allowed them to live under German law. By 1240 their position in the country was well established.

The invasion of the Mongols or Tartars in the year 1240 made the need for colonists much greater. Batu and his Tartar Horde swept across the steppe, across Russia, into Poland, and down into Hungary, where a great battle was fought, in which the Tartars were not indeed defeated, but were obliged to pay so dear for victory that they retired from Poland as well as from Hungary. They left behind them a devastated country, ruined towns, and a population so diminished that colonists were a necessity if the life of the country was to go on. The princes in this crisis turned to the Germans and offered them practically their own terms if they would come to Poland. These terms were, self-government, freedom from taxation, and in most cases from military service. In return, the German colonists built up strong, rich towns, better in every way than Poland had ever had before. These colonists

soon came to form, as they had formed at home, a wealthy middle class, which Poland had never had, which she had greatly needed, and which was of the greatest value to her in counteracting the influence of the nobles and establishing new standards of comfort and economic efficiency.

The nobles, for obvious reasons, disliked the immunities of the Germans, and were slow to bring German peasants onto their estates; but they saw the advantages of immunity for themselves, and began to demand it. As the princes were poor, very numerous, and hopelessly at odds with one another, they were dependent upon their nobles, and the "barons," or more powerful of the nobles, were thus in a position to make demands which the prince could not well refuse. The result was that they too freed themselves from dues and public services, such as the building of castles and roads, the repair of bridges, and from the jurisdiction of all the royal officials. Sometimes they were even exempted from military service. Quite generally they got the exclusive right to hold courts for the peasants living on their estates, which was the most remunerative of all these privileges. In granting these immunities the princes made some exceptions. In case of invasion by the

barbarians, exemption from military service did not hold, nor did the exemption from taxes and dues in times of great and exceptional public need. Often, also, in granting jurisdictions, the prince kept the ultimate power of life and death in his own hands, and reserved the right to summon the nobles before him in person, even when he freed them from the jurisdiction of his officials.

The net result of all this was that by the end of the thirteenth century the higher clergy and the richer and more powerful nobles had very largely passed from under the king's control, and were practically free from the burdens of public service and of taxation. This meant a corresponding depression of the *szlachta* and *kmety* classes, upon whom, quite contrary to the old law and custom, the whole public burden now fell. Nor was this all. During this same period the higher nobles and clergy had become the most powerful factors in the government of the kingdom and the king had assumed quite a secondary place.

It was during the struggle between Mieczysław III and the party that supported Casimir that the foundations of aristocratic government were laid. As soon as he was on the throne, Casimir called a synod or general assem-

bly of the bishops of the kingdom and this assembly promulgated decrees, on the one hand against the plundering of the poor peasants which had been so grievous an evil under Mieczyslaw III, and on the other against the seizure by the princes of the land of ecclesiastics after their death. Casimir also created a permanent advisory council or senate, composed of the richer and more powerful nobles and the higher clergy, which in the course of a few years took to itself many of the powers of the King. They did not hesitate to threaten deposition — at one time they even negotiated with the de-throned Mieczyslaw III — when Casimir did anything without their advice or against their will. After the death of Casimir, it was the Senate which chose his son, Leszek the White, as his successor, using the opportunity to proclaim that the legality of the Senate's choice was quite independent of the sanction of either Emperor or Pope; and although his claim was hotly contested by Mieczyslaw III in a long civil war, yet in the end Leszek retained the kingship and thus vindicated the power of the Senate.

During the reign of Leszek the White, Pomerania became an independent duchy and the Teutonic Knights settled in Masovia, the latter

## 34 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

an event of sinister and far-reaching importance in Polish history because the power was thus established which was finally to cut Poland off from her Baltic seaboard, thus altering and impoverishing her whole future.

Boleslaus III had ruled on the Baltic coast from the island of Rügen to Königsberg, including the mouths of the three rivers, Oder, Vistula, and Pregel. Under Boleslaus IV, the Germans conquered to the Oder. Shortly after, Casimir the Just gave the country about the mouth of the Oder to the princes of the country and allowed them to take the title of Dukes of Pomerania. The rest of the country — that is, the Vistula region and Danzig — he ruled directly through governors. Both governor and dukes united against the Danes, who coveted the country and after a time succeeded in seizing Danzig. The Poles neglected to send help at this critical moment, and the Pomeranians, thrown back on themselves, chose as their governor a Pomeranian, Sventopolk, who drove out the Danes and took Danzig. Leszek confirmed him in his governorship, but Sventopolk was not satisfied. He wanted to be independent. Some of the Polish princes favored his pretensions, but Leszek would not consent to it and called the Council in order to lay the



matter before it. Sventopolk came to the Council, kidnaped Leszek, carried him off on his horse to a lonely place, and killed him; and as a result, the Council gave him his title of Duke of Pomerania and Danzig!

Conrad, the younger brother of Leszek, was Duke of Masovia, and, on account of the position of his duchy, it was upon him that there fell the brunt of the task of beating off the constant attacks of the savage heathen tribes — the Prussians and Lithuanians and kindred peoples — to the northeast, who took advantage of the weakness of Poland in the early thirteenth century to push forward with special vigor. Conrad, a violent, passionate nature, in a moment of rage had killed with his own hand his Palatine Kristian, who had spent his life fighting against the Prussians and had become a terror to these savages. After his death, Conrad could find no one to fill his place, and the Prussians invaded, pillaged, and occupied at will the border districts of Masovia. To get rid of them Conrad had to buy them off, and was obliged to tax his people exorbitantly for the purpose. They were obliged to give their fur coats and other clothes as taxes, since it was these articles that the Prussians especially wanted. Even this sufficed only temporarily,

## 36 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

and Conrad, at his wits' end, finally sought help from the Teutonic Knights.

The Order of the Teutonic Knights came into existence during the Third Crusade with the founding by some benevolent German merchants from Lubeck and Bremen of a hospital for the Crusaders in Acre. Later the hospital became attached to the German Church of St. Mary in Jerusalem, and in 1198 the Brethren of the Hospital of St. Mary were made into an order of knights and the rule was established that henceforth only Germans of noble birth could become brethren of the Order. They lived a semi-monastic life under the rule of St. Augustine, and their duties were to fight, to convert the heathen, and to care for the sick — with the emphasis in practice distinctly on the fighting. After the Crusades were over it was a little difficult to find a place for these turbulent soldiers of the Cross. They had gone to Hungary in 1211 to help the king fight the Comans, but had been turned out of the country as a result of trying to make themselves independent rulers of Transylvania. It was then that the Duke of Masovia invited the Knights to come to his aid, offering them the district of Kulm and freedom to conquer what else they could at the expense of the Prussians. All they needed

was the opportunity. By 1260 they had conquered the whole east bank of the Vistula from Kulm to the coast and the Baltic coast from the Vistula to Königsberg. By the union with them in 1237 of the Knights of the Sword, an order similar to their own, which had been founded in 1201 to conquer and Christianize the eastern Baltic coast, they added Livonia and Courland to their possessions and were thus in control of the greater part of the Baltic seaboard. During the fourteenth century they went farther, conquered the Lithuanian province of Samogitia and then turned their arms against the Poles, from whom they conquered Pomerellen, or Pomerania east of the Oder, including the great Polish port of Danzig. Supported by the Pope (to whom in 1234 the Order had given its territories and received them back in fief, thus freeing themselves from lay control) and constantly reinforced by the pick of the German military nobility, the Order became a serious menace to Polish independence.

[Thus, both within and without, the Germanization of Poland went on and, added to disunion and weakness, made the destruction of the Polish state seem a matter of only a little time. The long reign of Boleslaus V, son of Leszek the White, and of his son, Leszek the

## 38 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

Black, marked the lowest point in the degradation of Poland, and during the extraordinary confusion that followed the death of the latter — extraordinary even for Poland in this period — Wacław, King of Bohemia, took possession of the kingship and held it for six years (1300–1306). Many of the Polish princes supported him as the only hope of uniting and saving their unhappy country, where violence was the ordinary way of life in times of nominal peace as well as in times of war; where privileges were constantly assumed and responsibilities and duties abandoned without any kind of legal sanction, and only might was right. Many of the lesser nobles lost land and freedom quite arbitrarily during this time, while the peasants were so badly treated by both nobles and officials that in some regions whole communities fled to the woods and became bandits and robbers. Wacław took the first necessary steps toward the restoration of order, and this task was carried further and Poland finally reunited by Władislaus I, called Lokietek, or “Long-Span,” who was crowned king in 1320.

### 3. 1320–1386

Władislaus Lokietek, Duke of Cujavia, and brother of Leszek the Black, had been recog-

nized as king in his own duchy in 1306, but had later been deposed in favor of Waclaw of Bohemia. But after the death of Waclaw, he was recalled, having in the mean time won the gratitude of the whole country and proved his ability as well as his patriotism by a victory over the Teutonic Knights. The assassination of Premislaus II, the last representative of the line of Mieczyslaw III, had removed all rivals to the claims of Wladislaus to the whole kingdom of the Piasts, which he united once more into a single sovereignty, with, however, some important exceptions. Silesia was held by Bohemia with the consent of its princes, Masovia was ruled by its own duke, and Pomerania was in the possession of the Knights. Not since Boleslaus III, however, had any Polish prince ruled so many provinces, and the satisfaction of the country was expressed by the solemn crowning of Wladislaus at Cracow by the Metropolitan Bishop of Gnesen. The ceremonial observed on this occasion became the custom for the coronation of all succeeding Polish kings.

Recognition by the Pope gave Wladislaus the support of the clergy, and he had also the support of the mass of his people in the great task of cementing this formal union by internal regeneration and by united opposition to the

foes that menaced it from without. Wladislaus encouraged in every way the revival of order and prosperity in his kingdom. He cleared the highways of brigands, and in a tour through the country he made a beginning, at least, of the great task of abolishing privilege and restoring the supremacy of the Polish law. He did not, indeed, attempt to take away the German law from those communities to whom its use had been legally granted, but all immunities assumed without sanction during the period of disorder had to be given up and the persons concerned returned to their former status under Polish law. Irrespective of what the previous arrangement had been, the King now took to himself the sole right of holding the highest courts for both laws.

In 1331 the King called at Chenciny an assembly which may be considered the first Polish Diet. It was composed of Senators, Chancellors from each duchy, members of the local magistracies, and the nobles. At the Diet of Chenciny the King for the first time admitted all the nobles — not merely, as heretofore, the higher nobles and clergy composing the Senate — to a share in his counsels. From this time on their powers grew steadily and after 1370 very rapidly. The distinctions between the

*kmetens*, who had no voice in the government, and the *szlachta*, all of whom *had*, became sharp. At the same time also the distinctions between the greater nobles, who alone were eligible to the Senate and to other places in the public service, and the *szlachta*, or lesser nobles, also grew sharper.

The nobles, or equestrian order, formed the main army of the country, other classes serving only when invasion or special need demanded it, and many of the greater nobles led whole detachments to war under their own armorial banners, thus usurping the war functions of the king's officials, the castellans and palatines, even as in peace they had usurped their jurisdictions.

Commerce revived rapidly as order and security increased. The German burghers made the most of the opportunities that the situation of the Polish cities offered for trade. Cracow, especially, at the junction of great overland trade routes, soon became the center of an enormous transit trade. A great highway from the south brought the products of Hungary and the Near East through the passes of the mountains into Cracow on their way north to Thorn, Stettin, and Danzig, whence ships carried them to Flanders and England. Cracow

also lay midway on the great road that led from the Black Sea and the South Russian ports to Breslau, Prague, and the western European capitals. Both Cracow and Danzig (now in the hands of the Teutonic Knights) were members of the Hanseatic League and had thus every facility for using their trading opportunities. The rich merchants of Cracow became powerful enough to get a law enacted enabling them to buy land and thus to become nobles. Trade along the Vistula was also building up the Masovian towns, and Warsaw began in the early fourteenth century to be a town of some importance.

During the whole of the reign of Wladislaus Lokietek the Teutonic Knights kept up a constant and menacing pressure on his frontiers. A victory over them which the King won in 1332, however, kept them from further encroachment on Polish land and showed the Poles that the Order was not invincible.

But the Knights were not Poland's only enemy. The King of Bohemia claimed the Polish throne as the successor of Waclaw, and carried on almost constant warfare on the southern border, while on the northeast the vigorous young Lithuanian state was becoming a dangerous neighbor.



The rise of Lithuania is one of the most remarkable of historical phenomena. The Lithuanians, a people of the same race as the Prussians, had dwelt for centuries among the swamps and forests of the upper Niemen, secure in their independence and their paganism. They had lived a separate, loosely organized tribal existence. The coming of the Teutonic Knights, their conquest of the Prussians, and especially their absorption of the Knights of the Sword and the resulting annexation of almost the whole Baltic coast, had roused the Lithuanians to a sense of their own danger. Under able leaders the scattered tribes threw off the habits of centuries and united to form a vigorous and warlike nation and created a state which during the next hundred years became by its conquests a vast empire and the greatest political force in central Europe.

Mendog, the first of the great Lithuanian princes, ruled from 1240 to 1263, just when the Tartar invasions were weakening Poland and Russia. As Lithuania was not invaded by the Tartars, she was able to derive advantage from the misfortunes of her neighbors and to conquer from Russia great slices of her western territories. A century later, at the death of Gedymis (1315-1341), another of her great rulers,

## 44 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

the Grand Duchy of Lithuania extended from Courland to the Carpathians and from the Bug to the river Desna, comprising Black, White, and Little Russia, including the great Dnieper Valley and Kiev.

The great West Russian provinces, weak and disorganized by the Tartar invasions, offered little resistance to the Lithuanians, who occupied the territories gradually, and generally without violence, restored order, and appointed princes of great Lithuanian families as their governors. The Lithuanians, pagans and barbarians, were thus brought into close contact with Christianity and with a civilization far older and more advanced than their own. Many of the princes were converted to Christianity by the Russians, some of them married Russian princesses of former reigning houses, and very generally they adopted the habits of life and in general the civilization of the Russians. The dialect of White Russia became the language of the court and remained so until the seventeenth century.

Gedymin never became a Christian. He could never bring himself to accept a religion in whose name the Teutonic Knights, the bitterest enemies of his country, fought and killed his people. But his sons and most of his people adopted

the Christianity of the Russians, which was that of the Eastern or Greek Orthodox Church. Olgierd, his successor, was baptized into the Greek Church on his marriage with a princess of Vitebsk, but his Christianity was more political than spiritual, as is seen by the fact that though in the Russian Christian parts of his kingdom he was a Christian, in Lithuania proper he sacrificed to the old pagan gods of his forefathers and by his own wish was buried with full pagan rites.

[Though at first hostile to Lithuania, the Poles soon recognized her value as an ally, and Wladislaus Lokietek in 1325 made a treaty with her against their common enemy, the Teutonic Order. This alliance was of great value to Poland, still far from strong or really united, and is interesting also as the beginning of the far closer union of the two states sixty years later.

When Wladislaus Lokietek died, he left to his son and successor, Casimir III, known as "the Great," a kingdom in which the worst forms, at least, of internal disorder were fast disappearing, and whose commerce and wealth were growing rapidly, but whose external relations were precarious. The King of Bohemia still claimed the throne of Poland. Masovia, jealous of its independence, was hostile, uniting

## 46 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

sometimes with Bohemia and sometimes with the Teutonic Knights, whom Wladislaus Lokietek had spent his life in fighting and whose possession of Pomerania he regarded as the most serious menace to his kingdom. His deathbed instructions to his son charged him to make the recovery of Pomerania his first duty, but Casimir did not follow this advice. He was not a fighter like his father, but a statesman who desired by peace to heal Poland's wounds, by wise legislation to restore order and prosperity, and by diplomacy and foreign alliances to bring her out of her isolation and into intimate and respected relations with other European states. Only thus he believed could the integrity of Poland be preserved. He saw that the long wars of his father had barely held his foes at bay. He preferred to lose what territory he must in order to be sure of what was left, and in pursuance of this policy he gave up to Bohemia all claims on Silesia for himself and his successors, accepting in return the King of Bohemia's renunciation of all claim to the Polish throne.

With the Knights also he made a treaty by which he acknowledged their claims to Pomerania, to Kulm, and to Michelow, and in return got them to withdraw from Cujavia and Dobzyn. The Polish people were much opposed

to this treaty. The King had hard work to get it through the Diet, and never wholly regained the popularity it cost him. The national instinct was undoubtedly right in opposing the relinquishing of Poland's claims on her seaboard, and it is a curious fact that Casimir seems to have been unaware of its value.

To balance these losses, Casimir added the Kingdom of Galicia or Halicz to Poland. This great territory had been settled by Russian refugees from Kiev in the twelfth century and had become under able princes one of the greatest of Russian principalities. In 1340 the princely line became extinct and Casimir claimed the country in the right of his mother. Olgierd of Lithuania, son of Gedymin, also claimed it, and war followed, but neither ruler really wanted to fight the other, and the mediation of the King of Hungary, brother-in-law of Casimir, resulted in a compromise by which Poland got East Galicia with Lemberg (Lwow) and Lithuania had the rest.

Internal policy was, however, Casimir's real interest and the basis of his title "the Great." He protected the Jews, carefully defined the spheres of Polish and Magdeburg or Teutonic law, and established within the kingdom a supreme court of appeal for both laws. Appeal

## 48 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

to German courts, outside of Poland, for final judgment, was no longer permitted to communities under German law. He also tried by legislation to improve the condition of the *kmetens* and to protect them against the ever-increasing power of the lords. But Casimir's reforms stopped short of the only measure that could really improve their condition permanently: namely, to give them a share in the government. In spite of the fact that he was called in derision by nobles "the peasant king," the condition of the peasantry became worse after Casimir as the nobles became better organized and more united. It was under Casimir, and largely as a result of the position his alliances gave his kingdom, that Masovia decided to accept the suzerainty of Poland instead of that of the Knights. Her allegiance was of great value, was worth indeed far more than many fortresses on Poland's northeastern border. Casimir devoted much of his attention to internal improvements. He founded new towns, built castles, churches, and monasteries, attracted many foreigners to the country and left it richer and more prosperous than it had ever been.

In order to keep the government in the hands of a king of his own sort, who could maintain its

integrity and keep the peace, Casimir secured the succession to the throne of his nephew, Louis, King of Hungary. He called a Diet at Cracow in 1339 which elected Louis to the Polish throne, thus setting aside the claims of the more direct heirs, the princes of Cujavia and Masovia, in return for which Louis promised never to tax without the consent of the Diet. Louis of Anjou, the new king, who came to the Polish throne in 1370, was a very able ruler, but too occupied with other interests to pay much attention to Poland. He visited the country only twice, indeed, in the twelve years of his reign. He wanted to keep the Polish throne in his family, however, so he saw that Poland was decently governed, and the prestige of his name and power protected her from many dangers and difficulties. Before his death he got the Polish nobles to elect as queen his daughter, Hedwig, and in return he reduced the land tax to so small a sum that the crown became dependent for supplies on the votes of the estates. Queen Hedwig in 1386 married Jagiello, Grand Duke of Lithuania, which is the most important single event in Polish history, as it united Poland with the great Lithuanian Empire and made her a great, powerful, and heterogeneous state.

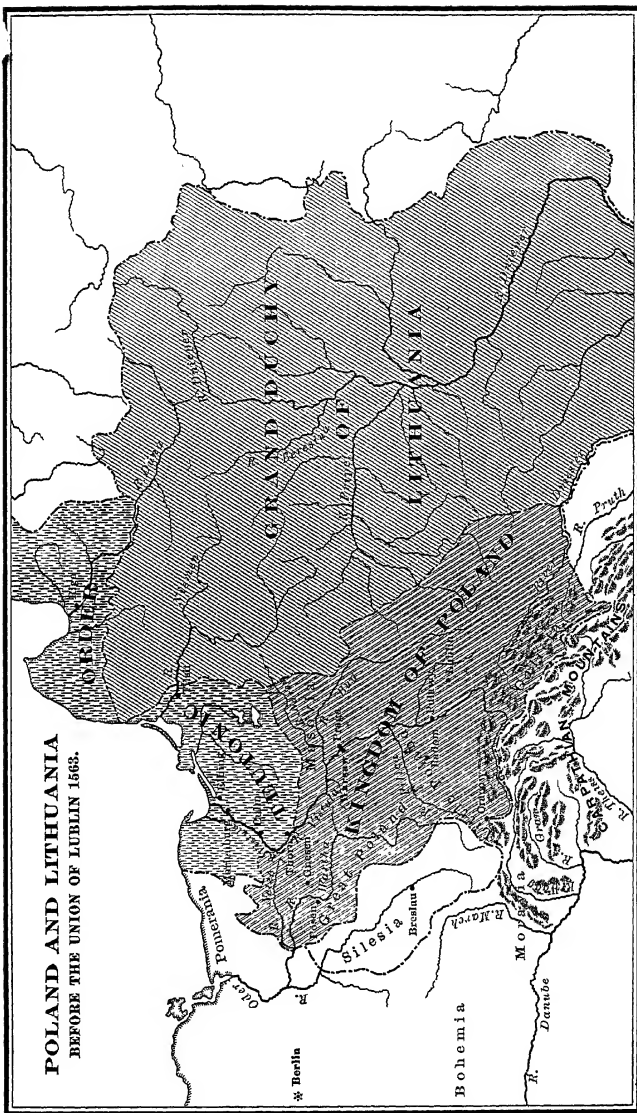
## CHAPTER II

### THE JAGIELLON KINGS THE ERA OF GREATNESS, 1386-1572

THE union of Poland and Lithuania under one king brought together two states which had nothing in common but their enemies, the Teutonic Knights and the rapidly rising Grand Duchy of Muscovy, and which contained elements so diverse, so antagonistic even, that it was an all but impossible task to weld them together and make of them a real political unit. Yet this was exactly the task that the Jagiellon kings set themselves, and that they succeeded in it is a great credit to their statesmanship. Four out of the seven of them were statesmen of real ability. They were of the patient, tactful, cautious type, seeing the limits of their tasks and staying carefully within them. But they were none of them really great kings. They lacked the political vision, the genius for administration which was necessary to stem the rising tide of the power of the nobility, and it was precisely during this period of Poland's greatness that the aristocratic constitution



**POLAND AND LITHUANIA**  
BEFORE THE UNION OF LUBLIN 1563.





came into existence, which in a short two hundred years replaced effective government with anarchy, made the king a mere figurehead, destroyed the freedom and the prosperity of the commercial and agricultural classes, and prepared Poland to become the prey of her stronger neighbors.

The election of Jagiello to the Polish throne raised up a host of enemies against him. The Teutonic Knights, already weakened by internal dissensions, saw their whole position menaced by the union of Poland and Lithuania. The conversion of Jagiello and of Lithuania (officially, anyway) to Christianity took away the nominal mission of the Order and reduced its warfare to political aggression pure and simple, and the great strength of the Lithuanian-Polish state was a serious menace to its political supremacy, especially as the Hundred Years' War and the Hussite movement, both now at their height, drew German fighting men to the West and deprived the Order of reinforcements. Thus threatened, the Order used all its diplomatic skill to break up the union by making trouble between Jagiello and his cousin, Witowt of Lithuania, who, though he greatly admired Jagiello personally, was opposed to him by every political consideration, and was the nat-

ural center of all the disaffection to the union that existed in Lithuania. Jagiello had caused the death of his uncle, Witowt's father, in order to secure the Lithuanian throne, using for this purpose the services of the Teutonic Order — ever ready to promote dissension among its neighbors. Witowt, ambitious and very able, both as a statesman and a soldier, had himself aspired to the throne of Poland, and failing that, had determined to keep Lithuania separate, raise it to a kingdom, and rule it himself. He was supported in this ambition, not only by the Teutonic Order and by the German Emperor Sigismund, but also, probably, by the majority of the Lithuanian nobility. Their opposition to the union was both political and religious. Religiously, though Lithuania proper was officially Roman Catholic, in fact she was still more than half pagan, while the province of Samogitia was frankly pagan and remained so for a long time. The rest of the territory — that conquered from Russia, which was five sixths of the whole — belonged to the Eastern or Greek Orthodox Catholic Church, and was almost as hostile to Roman Catholicism as to paganism. Since the Greek Church is so important an element in Polish history, a word regarding its history is perhaps in place.

Originally, as is well known, the Catholic Church was one. Each bishop was supreme in his own diocese and subject to no superior authority except the General Church Councils. When, however, the Roman Empire broke into two parts, the Eastern and the Western, as a result of the barbarian invasions, the two branches of the Church developed very differently. The Church of the West was very strongly influenced by Roman law. Changes in its creed, in its ritual, and also the increasing claims of the Bishop of Rome to supremacy over the other bishops, and finally over the world, completely estranged the Eastern Church and led to its rejection of the authority of the Councils where these matters were decided in favor of the West. It continued its existence as a separate Church, composed of the patriarchates (or archbishoprics) of Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Constantinople. Although no one of these ever attained a supremacy over the others at all comparable to the supremacy of Rome in the West, yet Constantinople being the capital city and the residence of the Emperor, its patriarch did acquire an influence and a prestige much greater than that of the other patriarchs.

It was from the Church at Constantinople

## 54 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

that the missionaries were sent who Christianized Russia and from Constantinople the Russians derived, not only their religion, but their learning, their art, their philosophy, and their whole civilization. The culture which they developed had thus a strong Oriental strain based as it was upon Byzantine tradition. On the other hand, the fact that the Poles were Roman Catholics meant that their civilization was essentially Roman and Teutonic in origin. This difference has been the basal reason for the age-long antagonism of these two greatest, and, geographically, most closely connected, of Slav peoples. From the very moment of her conversion, Orthodoxy has been an integral part, a necessary characteristic, of Russian nationalism, and opposition to the one has been, from the Polish point of view, necessarily opposition to the other. All the old-Russian part of Lithuania was thus steadily opposed to any union with Roman Catholic Poland.

Politically, also, there were difficulties. Lithuania was feudally organized, and the greater nobles as well as the Grand Duke dreaded the lessening of their authority over their vassals and their peasantry, which amalgamation with a state so loosely organized and so decentralized as Poland would be almost sure to produce.

They resented also Poland's claim on the border provinces of Volhynia and Podolia, which Lithuanian arms had conquered, and were jealous of Poland's claim to superiority on the basis of the higher level of her civilization.

Witowt had, therefore, a strong following, and Jagiello saw that he could not afford to remain his enemy, especially when the Teutonic Knights began their inevitable campaign against him in 1390. Accordingly, by the Compact of Wilna in 1401, Jagiello surrendered all his rights to the Grand Duchy to Witowt, on the sole condition that the two states were to have jointly elected sovereigns and were to pursue a common policy. Witowt then joined Jagiello in the war against the Knights, and together they inflicted upon them the great defeat at Grünewald, or Tannenberg (July, 1410). Jagiello was unable to follow up his victory, however, because Witowt withdrew the Lithuanian army to meet a Tartar raid at home, and the Polish army had to be persuaded to fight. This took so much time that the opportunity passed and the peace signed the following year, the first Peace of Thorn (1411), was in fact little more than a truce, as it left the Order territorially intact. The Knights simply withdrew from Samogitia and Dobryzn — Polish

## 56 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

provinces that they had invaded during the war — and paid an indemnity.

The King was determined to have more, and saw that to do it it was necessary to conciliate Lithuania still further. Accordingly, he opened negotiations with Witowt and in 1414 the Union of Horodlo was made which put the two states on terms of exact equality. Separate and identical administrations were provided for the two countries, all the great officers of state being duplicated, one for "the Crown," as Poland was designated, one for the Grand Duchy. The Grand Duke was declared to be in all respects the equal of the King of Poland and all the privileges of the Polish nobles were extended to the Roman Catholic nobles of Lithuania. This last concession meant exemption from all the services and dues of a feudal nature which had been in force since the time of Gedymin, and was a great advantage to the nobility, though it impoverished the state. The limitation of the privilege to Roman Catholics was to secure Poland against the Muscovite leanings of the Orthodox in the old-Russian provinces. This enactment secured to the Union the support of all the Catholic Lithuanian nobles in spite of the fact that Witowt did not like it and prevented its being carried out in many cases.



During the next reign, in 1434, a union of the Greek and Roman churches took place at a convent in Florence, — known as the “Union of Florence,” — which resulted in establishing what is known as the “Uniate Church.” The Orthodox Church conceded recognition of the Pope, and in return the Roman Church agreed to their use of their own ritual, the retention of their own creed and of a married clergy. This arrangement was a convenient compromise by which, without violence to their faith, the Orthodox nobles of Lithuania could enjoy the benefits of the Union of Horodlo and it was very generally adopted throughout the Ukraine and later in Lithuania, thus considerably increasing Lithuanian support of the Union.

The death of Queen Hedwig, in 1399, was a very real loss to the kingdom. Obligated when only a girl, for political reasons, to give up her cousin, William of Habsburg, to whom she was betrothed and whom she dearly loved, and to marry a man twice her age, whom she had never seen and whom all her circle regarded as a barbarian, she reconciled herself to the marriage by regarding it as a Christian mission as well as a patriotic service and devoted her life to Christianizing, educating, and civilizing her people. Her sympathy with the poor

and the oppressed was well known all over the kingdom, but she had more vigorous qualities as well. On one occasion, when Jagiello was absent in Lithuania and the Hungarians invaded the Polish border, she herself led an army against them, notwithstanding the fact that the Hungarians were her own people. She founded a Lithuanian College at Prague, and bequeathed her jewels for the completion of the University of Cracow, founded in 1364 by Casimir the Great. Jagiello outlived her thirty-three years and had two other wives after her death.

The Hussite wars took place during the reign of Jagiello and the Hussite influence was considerably felt in Poland. The King not only helped the Hussite cause with men and money, for political reasons, but allowed public discussions of the points at issue between the Hussites and Roman Catholics to take place freely in Cracow. This was a unique and remarkable thing in fifteenth-century Europe, where bigotry was so characteristic of religious zeal and persecution the chief attention paid to new religious ideas.

During Jagiello's long reign of forty-eight years, Poland was well started on her way to become a great power. He established a gov-

ernment and created a unity of feeling strong enough to hold the country together and enable it to go on by itself during the ten years of bad government that followed his death.

Wladislaus III (1434-1444), son of Wladislaus-Jagiello, was only nine years old when he became king and only twenty when he died on the battlefield of Varna fighting against the Turks. In 1442 he had been elected King of Hungary when that country was making a titanic struggle against the Turks and wanted the assistance of the great Lithuano-Polish state. The young Wladislaus defeated the Turks and made a good peace for Hungary, but was urged by the Papal Legate to reopen the war in order to draw off the Turks from Constantinople, which they were besieging, and which nine years later they were to capture. It was at the head of an expedition which he led for the relief of Constantinople that the King was killed — happily, perhaps, for Poland.

Casimir IV (1447-1492), his brother, who succeeded him, was a statesman of the type of his father, whose work he carried forward with ability and devotion. He was only seventeen when his brother died, he had always lived in Lithuania which he had ruled during his brother's life, and, sagacious beyond his years,

## 60 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

he had small desire to exchange the Lithuanian throne for the more troublesome one of Poland. He was resolved to become King of Poland only on condition of reëstablishing the real union of the two crowns. It was three years before the questions at issue between the two countries had been settled sufficiently to his liking for him to accept the throne of Poland.

Under Casimir, Pomerelia (Pomerania west of the Vistula), in the possession of the Teutonic Knights since the thirteenth century, was restored to Poland as the result of the long war which Casimir waged against them in alliance with the townspeople and gentry of Pomerelia. These classes in 1440 formed the so-called "Prussian League" for the defense of their rights against the Order, which had become simply a governing aristocracy, wholly out of touch with the people, and exploiting them in its own selfish interests. In 1454 the Prussian League offered its allegiance to Casimir and fought with him for thirteen years for freedom from the Order. The length of the war was due very largely to the fact that the Polish nobles made the King's dependence upon them for men and money the occasion to exact, as the price of every subsidy, constitutional concessions of the greatest importance. The delays

and uncertainties thus entailed hampered the King greatly, but finally he managed to get the money with which to pay Bohemian mercenaries, the best soldiers of that day, by whose assistance the Order was, at last, defeated. Casimir's diplomatic skill also won the Pope, heretofore the champion of the Knights, to his side, and it was through papal mediation that the Peace of Thorn (1466) was finally signed which gave to Poland Pomerelia, or Polish Prussia. Over East Prussia or Prussia proper the King was able to establish only his suzerainty, the Teutonic Order continuing to rule there, but as vassals of the King of Poland. The Grand Master of the Order was given the first place in the Polish Senate, having a seat at the King's right hand, and had exclusive jurisdiction over his own territories, even the amount of military service he rendered being left largely to his own decision.

This compromise treaty was a keen disappointment to the King, who had counted on conquering the Order once for all and subjecting it absolutely to Poland, but his hands were tied by the selfishness and fatal blindness of the nobles. But, after all, Poland's gains were very great. The possession of the Baltic seaboard, after three hundred years, offered great

## 62 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

opportunities for commercial expansion, and tended to bring Poland into the wider channels of the life of the West.

From the constitutional point of view the struggle between the King and the nobles who formed his army was of the greatest importance. Profiting by the King's necessities — which they ought to have felt were their own necessities also, but did not — the *szlachta* refused to go to war until the King had granted the so-called "Statutes of Nieszawa" (1454), by which he promised neither to make new laws nor call the nation (i.e., the *szlachta*) to arms without the consent of the *szlachta*. As exemption from all taxes and dues *except* military service had been granted them by Louis of Anjou (in 1374, by the "Privilege of Kaschau" in order to secure the succession of his daughter to the throne), and as military service now became voluntary with them and legislation was in their hands, they were theoretically in control of the state, and needed only the machinery by which to use their new powers and carry out their will. They found this machinery in their local assemblies or Dietines, or *Sejmiki*, and later in the central Diet which they developed to meet their requirements.

To understand this development we must

look back to the time of Casimir the Great, when the *szlachta*, desirous of resisting the King's efforts toward centralization, looked about for means to their end. The most natural and effective instrument that came to their hand was the local assemblies of the principalities, or palatinates as they came to be called. The *szlachta* succeeded in transforming these hitherto official councils into general assemblies of all the *szlachta* of the provinces. At first the Dietines concerned themselves with local affairs only, but as the *szlachta* won new and wider rights from the Crown they exercised these also through the *Sejmiki*, partly because they were in existence and no machinery for united action was, but, probably, chiefly because it was natural to them to act as members of the local community rather than as citizens of a united state. The long "Partitional Period" had created this provincial feeling which led inevitably to a decentralized state.

The result of this was that for purposes of taxation after 1374, and of legislation after 1454, the King had to consult each Dietine separately. This was difficult in many ways, and the need of a central Diet was greatly felt. The germ of one, indeed, existed and was developed in the next reign, but Casimir had to deal with

## 64 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

the Dietines directly, and found it a slow and trying process.

The Hussite movement was at its height in Bohemia during Casimir's reign, and Casimir, tolerant like all the Jagiellos, was very friendly with the Hussite leaders. The King of Bohemia at this time was George Podiebrodski who, realizing that papal opposition to his policy of toleration toward the Hussites would make the succession of his own son impossible, made an alliance with Casimir by which Casimir's eldest son, Wladislaus, became King of Bohemia on the death of Podiebrodski in 1471. Casimir also tried to put his second son, John Albert, on the Hungarian throne, and wasted long years in this fruitless and mistaken attempt — one of the very few mistakes that Casimir made.

While he was wasting his efforts on the south and west, his enemies on his Lithuanian frontiers — Teutonic Knights, Turks, Tartars, and Muscovites, all encouraged and aided by the hostile King of Hungary — were making serious trouble. Muscovy, particularly, under its very able and astute Czar Ivan III, had thrown off the Tartar yoke and had set to work to expand toward the west, and particularly to reconquer the old-Russian lands in the possession of Lithuania. The Turks also, in 1453,



had captured Constantinople and had taken the Tartars of the Crimea under their protection, and the combination had become a very serious menace to southern Europe. A league was in process of formation against them which Casimir joined in 1484, chiefly in order to keep open Poland's great southern trade route which was seriously menaced by the Turkish capture of the Moldavian towns commanding the mouths of the Danube and the Dniester. Poland had exercised a very loose sort of suzerainty over Moldavia since 1393.<sup>1</sup> It had been sufficient, however, to protect her trade which was the chief value to her of the province.

During the war over Moldavia the King of Hungary, Matthias Corvinus, the inveterate enemy of Casimir, was killed. The Hungarians at once elected Wladislaus of Bohemia to fill his place, which effectively solved the Hungarian problem for Poland and put the Jagiellon dynasty in possession of four thrones.

During the reign of Casimir and under his wise guidance, Poland and Lithuania had remained closely united and the state had become a great European power. The separatist tendencies in Lithuania, still very strong and

<sup>1</sup> Roman Prince of Halicz was ruler of Moldavia in 1393, when, at his own wish, he became a vassal of the King of Poland.

## 66 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

constantly pushing Lithuania toward Muscovy, were always recognized by Casimir as a very real danger to the union, and he worked incessantly to counteract these tendencies by constructive means. He promoted Catholic propaganda in Lithuania by every means in his power except persecution of the Orthodox, which he would not consider for a moment. He also favored the Uniate churches, established in Lithuania in 1443, by considering the Uniates as Catholics and extending to them all the privileges granted to the Catholics by Horodlo. He never appointed a viceroy for Lithuania or allowed even one of his sons to represent him there, but kept the government entirely under his own direction, thus maintaining absolute unity and centralization.

The long reign of Casimir IV was followed by the short reigns of his third and fourth sons. John Albert (1492-1501) and Alexander (1501-1506).

The reign of John Albert was filled with wars against the Turks, which were almost never successful and necessitated constant appeals for money to the *szlachta*, who gave very little, but extorted in return concessions that went far toward ruining the country. To avoid the necessity of applying to each Dietine

for each grant, a slow and troublesome process, John Albert revived the National Diet and had each of the Dietines send deputies to it. Since the Diet of Chenciny in 1331 the *szlachta* had had the theoretical right to sit with the Senate and advise the King, and from time to time some of them had done so. So also had representatives from the towns and the lower clergy. But it was not until 1493, in the Diet summoned by John Albert at Piotrkow, that all the Dietines were represented. This Diet thus formed Poland's Model Parliament. Like the English Parliament the Diet sat in two houses: the Senate, composed of prelates, palatines, castellans, and crown officials, formed the upper House, while the deputies from the Dietines, called Nuncios, formed the lower. Deputies from the towns sat with the Nuncios in this and in some few succeeding Diets, but they soon dropped out, just why is not known.

At the Diet of 1493, before financial matters were even considered, the King was obliged to sign a new "Constitution" confirming all the privileges of the *szlachta*. In return he might reasonably have expected a generous grant, but, on the contrary, the *szlachta* were so niggardly that by 1496 the King was as poor as ever, and had to call a new Diet to relieve his

necessities. The *szlachta* had apparently spent the intervening years preparing for this occasion and came to the Diet of 1496 with a whole volume of new demands which, when enacted into laws, as they were before the Diet adjourned, completed the process which made the *szlachta* a class apart, possessing all the privileges of government, free from all its burdens, and holding the other classes in a subjection that not only degraded the commercial and agricultural classes politically, but ultimately ruined them economically, thus destroying the prosperity of the whole country and diminishing very seriously the sources of wealth for the state. One of the most important of these enactments was one by which the burgesses were deprived of the right to hold land outside the very restricted area of the city walls. This practically excluded them from holding any land at all, and thus made it impossible for the richer merchants, as in other countries, to buy landed estates, and thus enter the noble and military class. Not only was a great incentive to the accumulation of wealth by this class thus destroyed, but another enactment exempting the *szlachta* from all export and import duties put the burgesses at such a disadvantage commercially that they soon ceased

to be a wealthy class, and in the course of a century no longer formed a class distinct from the peasantry, to whose level they had been gradually pressed down.

The agricultural class, also, which had struggled long and manfully to maintain its freedom, was now pushed down into a condition of serfdom by statutes which, on the one hand, limited the freedom of the farmers by obliging them to stay on the land and work only for their landlords and at customary wages during harvest time when other labor was short and prices for outside labor high; and, on the other, changed the system of land tenure into what was practically the socage system.

Another law passed at this time, by which the holding of Church benefices was limited to those whose parents were both noble,<sup>1</sup> put the Church on the side of the privileged and deprived the lower classes of their best champion.

And in return for all this, John Albert got nothing at all from the *szlachta* personally, who contented themselves with voting him two small subsidies, one of which came out of the towns and the other from the peasants! Small wonder that the King's Italian tutor, Buona-

<sup>1</sup> Exception was made of three canonries, to which doctors of canon law, medicine, and theology of *plebeian origin* were alone eligible.

corsi, should have advised him to restrain the liberties of the nobles at all costs, though it is not at all probable that the King allowed himself to be defeated by the Turks and Tartars in Moldavia in order to increase the royal authority, as some of his nobles accused him of doing. In spite of his misfortunes the King seems to have kept the confidence of the masses of the people. Even the Diet in 1501, shortly before his death, granted back to him the entire control of the military forces of the kingdom in order to facilitate his opposition to the Turks, who during the later years of the reign were ravaging Poland's southeastern border.

[John Albert was succeeded by his brother Alexander (1501-1506), who in open defiance of the agreement of Horodlo had been elected Grand Duke of Lithuania in 1492. Steady pressure from Muscovy, however, had at last convinced Lithuania that union with Poland was useful, and from this time on the Lithuanians took the Kings of Poland for their Grand Dukes.

[During Alexander's reign, however, Poland could give Lithuania little help. Turks and Moldavians continued their raids on her borders, and the Teutonic Knights, under a vigorous and able Grand Master, Albert of Hohen-

zollern, took advantage of the situation to refuse homage to the Polish King and to attempt the reconquest of Polish Prussia. Worse than that, however, the *szlachta* took advantage of the weakness of Alexander, both in character and in health, to complete their work of wrecking the kingship and despoiling the lower classes.

Perceiving how much greater their power of extortion was over an uncrowned than over a crowned king, the *szlachta* presented to him and obliged him to sign, in place of the usual coronation agreement, by which the King simply confirmed the privileges of the nobility, a whole series of articles, known as the "Articles of Mielnica," by which the King was deprived of the control of the mint and the regalia, and his appointing power greatly reduced; members of the Senate also were exempted from prosecution by the royal courts.

The *Pacta Conventa* thus became what it afterwards remained under the elective kingship, one of the most formidable governmental weapons in the hands of the ruling class.

But even greater humiliations were in store for the King. In 1504 the Diet enacted that the royal estates should not be mortgaged without the unanimous consent of the Senate given during the sitting of the Diet; that the King

should be constantly attended by a permanent council of twenty-four Senators (the Senators were to take six-month turns at this somewhat arduous addition to their functions) and that the Grand Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor should be appointed only during the session of the Diet, and should receive the ratification of the Senate. In 1505, at the famous Diet of Radom, by the Edict *Nihil Novi*, the Diet was given its permanent organization, and the King bound himself and his successors never to alter it, or any other part of the Constitution, or to enact new legislation without the consent of both houses of the Diet.

[A]lexander's death in 1506 left the country in a bad condition. The finances were ruined by extravagance and bad government; the south-eastern provinces were wasted by Tartar raids, while Lithuania was threatened by Muscovy without and torn by feuds among the nobles within.

[F]ortunately the new King, Sigismund I (1506-1548), Alexander's brother, was a man of character, talents, and experience in government. His brother, Wladislaus of Bohemia and Hungary, had made him Governor of Silesia, the most troublesome of all his possessions, where Sigismund had speedily put an end to



the continual and age-long dissension between Slavs and Germans, reorganized the finances, and made the province a model of a modern well-governed state. There is no doubt that Sigismund understood Poland's problems and that his policy, of peace abroad and of economy and financial reorganization at home, designed to pay Poland's debts and give to the King an income that should make him, in some measure at least, independent of the *szlachta*, was a wise one, and had he come to the throne a little earlier, before the *szlachta* were so firmly entrenched, he might have been able to carry out his policy and put the kingship in a position of vantage that later monarchs could have sustained, and thus have prevented the worst of Poland's degradation. But it was too late. The *szlachta*, already supreme legislatively, during this reign steadily encroached upon the executive authority and passed statutes forbidding the Captain-General, or "Grand Hetman," to levy troops, the Lord Treasurer to collect taxes, or the Grand Councillor to direct the tribunals of the kingdom. The Diet was to attend to these matters henceforth. On the other hand, the King upheld the *szlachta* in their determined opposition to the attempt of the magnates to separate themselves from

## 74 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

the *szlachta* and become legally, what they were in large measure economically and socially, a class apart. The victory of the *szlachta* is seen in the enactment of the Diet of 1527, which did away with all exemptions from military service and obliged every great noble, as well as every poorer one, to contribute to the army according to his means. As the troops thus contributed had to be placed under the King's direct control, this measure was of real advantage to the monarchy. On the other hand, however, suspicion of the magnates of the Senate, through whose hands, as officers of the Crown, the public money must necessarily pass, kept the Diets of 1522 and 1523 from voting anything at all for national defense, notwithstanding the fact that the King was at war with the Turks. This was only the culmination of a policy of parsimony and indecision on financial matters that hampered and, in large measure, made impossible the King's work of rehabilitation.

In view of these facts what the King accomplished in the way of financial regeneration is really remarkable. At the very beginning of his reign, he called to conference with him some of the successful foreign merchants and bankers of Cracow, such as the Scotchman, John Boner, and the Germans, Kaspar Beer and the two

Bettmans, and put into their hands the reform of the finances of the state. By applying very skillful business management to the problem, they succeeded in rescuing the state from bankruptcy. The King was enabled to pay his brother's debts, to recover some of the alienated crown lands, and to hire a few mercenaries to form the nucleus of a standing army independent of the vagaries of the *szlachta*. His attempt to increase this army by commuting the military services of the nobility to money payments was, however, rejected by the Diet.

The *szlachta* were also during this reign doing their best to exclude the deputies of the towns from the Diets and thus complete the degradation of the burgher class. But this the King was able to prevent. Recognizing the great value to the state of a rich, strong, middle class, he was, as indeed were all the Jagiellos, the consistent friend and champion of the towns. In 1513, when the representatives of Cracow were excluded from their local Dietine, the King reinstated them and publicly confirmed them in their right to be there. This, however, did not prevent the Dietines from trying again, and in 1539 the King issued an edict threatening to prosecute for *lèse-majesté* any noble who should attempt to curtail the rights of the citizens.

## 76 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

Many Dietines were also now steadily curtailing the rights of the peasantry. The obligation to work one day a week without pay on the lord's land now became, in some palatinates, a legal and a general one, instead of a matter of individual arrangement as heretofore.

It was during this reign that the Reformation came into Poland. Poland had close relations with Wittenberg and other German universities through her youth who attended them in large numbers, and the doctrines of Luther spread rapidly, especially in Polish Prussia. In Danzig, in 1524, five important churches changed from the Catholic to the Protestant worship. The Protestant movement here, as in many other places, was associated with a democratic political movement which aimed at getting the town government out of the hands of the ruling oligarchy. The Lutheran party were able to force the election of a new town council, but not content with a moderate victory they proceeded to abolish Roman Catholicism, close the monasteries, and declare all Church property confiscated to the Government. These measures so offended the Roman Catholics, still very numerous in the town, that the political issue became secondary, and when the King came with his troops and re-

stored the old order the sentiment of the townspeople was generally with him.

Though Sigismund was himself a strong Catholic and regarded the Lutheran doctrines as dangerous innovations, he was not bigoted and neither persecuted Protestants nor allowed the conversion of his friends to that faith to make a difference in his confidence in them either personally or officially. He was equally tolerant toward the Greek Church, and his favor and friendship toward their religion did much to keep the old-Russian provinces faithful to the union with Poland at a time when external events strongly taxed their allegiance.

Temperamentally a lover of peace, and regarding it as a necessity for restoring prosperity to the country and rebuilding the strength of the monarchy, Sigismund managed by diplomacy and compromise to keep the country from a long war, but at no time during his reign can he be said to have been really at peace with Muscovy.

Originally a very tiny principality belonging to a very minor prince of the group that migrated from Kiev to the northeast, Muscovy had used an excellent trading position to become rich, under able princes had extended her territories, and by friendship with the Tartar

## 78 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

*khans* had grown strong enough to lead the movement that finally freed the Russian princes from the Tartar yoke. Having thus achieved the position of leader in an all-Russian cause, the Muscovite prince laid claim to all the lands hitherto Russian (under the suzerainty of the Grand Prince of Kiev) and called himself, by virtue of his claim upon them, "Czar of all Russia." The Russian principalities independent of him, no less than Lithuania, regarded this claim as entirely preposterous, but Muscovy never abandoned it, and in the end she made it good. It meant, meanwhile, permanent hostility between Muscovy and Poland, and any cessation of hostilities was never felt to be more than a truce.

Sigismund's relations with Muscovy, as well as his whole foreign policy, were complicated and made extremely difficult by the treachery of Prince Michael Glinsky. A Lithuanian of great talents, highly educated, traveled, a soldier of European renown, Prince Michael had won the heart as well as the favor of King Alexander, who had made him Court Marshal of Lithuania and had left the government of the Grand Duchy practically in his hands. The Prince had used his position to enrich himself and his family to such an extent that at Alex-

ander's death nearly half of Lithuania was in their hands, and it was generally thought that Prince Michael meditated the erection of these territories into an independent duchy for himself. In any case, he was altogether too powerful a subject for Sigismund's liking, and their mutual suspicion led to Glinsky's desertion to Muscovy, carrying a good number of his friends and supporters with him. Henceforth he was the most persistent and insidious of Sigismund's enemies. As the chief adviser of the Czar Vasily III, who had married his niece, Helena Glinsky, he was a very formidable antagonist, giving help to all Sigismund's foes, and letting slip no opportunity to embarrass and harass him. And there were many such. Turks, Tartars, and Teutonic Knights, as well as Muscovites, were always ready to cross the border when occasion offered, and the aspirations of the Habsburg Emperors to the thrones of Hungary and Bohemia, occupied by Sigismund's brother, Wladislaus, threatened the dynasty with a new danger.

As a result of *szlachta* control the Polish army was always inefficient and the treasury always empty, so that, though the Poles were then, as always, excellent soldiers, and the Polish army particularly well officered by men trained in the

## 80 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

best foreign service, the Czar's army, while inferior in personnel, could generally defeat them by superior organization. For these reasons Smolensk, the great border fortress of Lithuania, remained in Russian hands, though Sigismund never acknowledged its loss by any treaty.

Similar reasons and the added pressure of the Turks on the south made necessary Poland's recognition of the transformation of the territories of the Teutonic Order into the Duchy of Prussia. Albert of Hohenzollern, the Grand Master, was converted to Protestantism in 1522, and to keep the territory of the Order in his own possession, he followed the custom of the day and secularized it; that is, he declared it no longer the property of the Order, but a secular duchy, hereditary in his family. Though this was, naturally, extremely objectionable to the Roman Catholic Powers, from whom the use of a technical word did not hide the fact that the transaction was plain robbery, Sigismund nevertheless recognized the new Protestant state, accepted the new Duke of Prussia as his vassal, and received his homage in April of 1525.

The Turkish question was a very serious one for Sigismund, and was the determining factor



in his attitude toward Habsburg aspirations to the thrones of Bohemia and Hungary. Up to the end of the fifteenth century, Hungary and Moldavia and the No Man's Land of the steppe had separated the Polish Empire from the Turks, and the King of Hungary had been the ruler upon whom the task fell of keeping the barrier intact against Turkish aggression. The subjugation of the Crimean Tartars by the Turks in 1475, however, followed by the submission of Moldavia to Turkish suzerainty, brought Poland for the first time into direct contact with Turkey. How threatening the Moldavian situation was is seen by the events of 1531. In that year, without any declaration of war, an army of Moldavians and Turks simply invaded Polish territory. The King was quite unprepared, the forces he could command few, and it was very largely the personal valor and superior generalship of the Polish commander, John Tarnowski, that defeated them. It is probable that the object of this expedition was to test the strength of Poland, and, if successful, it was to be followed up by a serious attempt to conquer the country. The Turks were now, under Suleiman II, nearing the height of their power; they had already crushed Hungary and advanced to the very walls of Vienna.

The King showed his appreciation of Tarnowski's great services by descending from the throne to welcome him when he entered the Senate — a unique distinction in the relations between Polish kings and their subjects.

The situation on the steppe was not less disquieting. The country from Kiev to the Black Sea, lying in the arm of the Dnieper, was an unprotected wilderness (it was known as the "Ukraine," meaning "border") and offered great advantages for Tartar raids, which were all too frequent and very harmful. The Tartars kept a Polish army busy all the time, but in spite of its presence the country was in constant disturbance and many captives were carried off each year to be sold as slaves in the markets of Turkey. The Poles felt keenly the humiliation of this situation, as well as its other inconveniences, and the belief that the great House of Habsburg would be the best guardian of both Hungary and Poland against the Turks was the chief reason why the King consented to, and urged his brother, Wladislaus, to accept, the marriage propositions of the Emperor Maximilian. By this arrangement the House of Habsburg, by virtue of the marriage between Anne, only daughter of Wladislaus, and Maximilian's grandson, Ferdinand, came into pos-

session of the thrones of Hungary and Bohemia after the death of Wladislaus's only son, Louis. Sigismund was one of the few statesmen of his day who recognized the real weakness of Hungary in spite of her outward appearance of greatness, and he saw in the Austrian connection the only means of giving her the strength which would enable her to continue to act as the barrier for Europe against the Turk. He consistently maintained this position throughout his reign; he refused the crown of Hungary when it was offered to him by the opponents of the Germans after the death of his nephew, Louis, in 1526; he refused also to help his son-in-law, John Zapolya of Transylvania, who accepted the crown when Sigismund refused it, and fought a long and terrible civil war to keep it. This war was ended by the compromise Peace of Grosswardein in 1538, by which John was to have the throne during his lifetime and was to be succeeded by Ferdinand of Habsburg. When John died in 1540, Sigismund obliged his sister, Queen Isabella of Hungary, to keep the treaty and hand over the kingdom to Ferdinand, though she and a very strong Hungarian party wanted to put her infant son on the throne. The leaders of this anti-German party were the Polish Primate, Jan Laski, and his

## 84 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

nephews, Hieronymus, Jan, and Stanislaus, all of them very powerful and very able. Their activities were a rather serious embarrassment to the King's policy of Habsburg friendship, but it survived to the end and was strengthened by the marriage of Sigismund's only son to the Austrian Archduchess Elizabeth.

In this reign, in 1526, at the extinction of the Piastine line of Masovian princes, Masovia was united with Poland. Its annexation added a strong democratic element to Polish politics which was of great importance in the next reign.

For the defense of the Ukraine against the Tartars nothing was done, though the Lord Marcher Daszkiewicz had a very admirable and inexpensive scheme for the organization of the wandering bands of freebooters of the steppe, called Cossacks, into companies for the defense of the border, and Queen Bona, in the work that she did for the protection of her private estates in the Ukraine, showed how easily and how effectively such a plan could have been carried out. She built two castles, one at Bar, another at Krzemieniec. At Bar she stationed her Steward, Bernard Pretficz, who so successfully repulsed the Tartar bands (he beat them off *seventy* times) that thousands

of colonists flocked thither where alone on all the border was life safe and a living secure.

Queen Bona was the second wife of King Sigismund; she was an Italian of the great Sforza family of Milan. Beautiful, cultivated, the patron of the Renaissance, she made the Court of Cracow a literary and artistic center of no mean importance. She was very unpopular in Poland on account of her greed for both money and power, her entire unscrupulousness, and her very mischievous influence over the King all during his latter years. She is suspected of having poisoned her daughter-in-law, Barbara Radziwill, that her son might marry some one more favored by herself.

Sigismund Augustus, or Sigismund II (1548-1572), came to the throne under the disadvantage of having to appoint almost all new advisers. A dozen or more of the old magnate families of Poland, Lithuania, and Masovia became extinct at this time, and the King had to raise members of the lesser nobles to positions that had never before been given to their families. The new King did not, however, regard this as a very serious disadvantage. He was of a far more yielding disposition than his father, more interested in new things, and more

ready to welcome new ideas. He had much of the suppleness of his Italian mother's race and much of their diplomatic genius, as well as a large measure of the tenacity of purpose of the Jagiellos. His subjects, a little contemptuous of a king "brought up by a woman," the friend of artists and speaking three languages besides his own, were surprised to find in him a ruler of firmness, intelligence, and rare skill in the management of men.

On his first public appearance after his father's death (he had been crowned during his father's lifetime), when the Senate of Lithuania came together to do homage to the new ruler, he threw a bomb into their midst by announcing his marriage with Barbara Radziwill, member of a great Lithuanian family, which had taken place secretly some years before. Barbara was a Calvinist, and the daughter of the leader of Lithuanian Calvinism, Nicholas Radziwill, called "the Black." As a Lithuanian she was especially offensive to the Polish nobles, who wished the King to marry a foreigner of royal blood, and as a Calvinist she was anathema to the clergy. The King's first Diet, which met in October, 1548, at Piotrkow, almost unanimously demanded that he divorce Barbara. John Tarnowski was the only Sena-

tor who supported the King, while the lower House was almost equally insistent. To these clamors the King replied quite calmly, "Every man has the right to choose his own wife; why cannot the King do the same? Or does the Christian religion allow me to put away her whom I have wedded? It is for you of the clergy, who know better about such things, to convince your brethren on this head. But I will not desert my wife, though she were stripped of everything but her shift."<sup>1</sup> After a stormy session the King dissolved the Diet, and issued a "Universal," or appeal to the people against the position of the Diet. Eighteen months later, when his second Diet came together, public opinion was so strongly with him that not a word about his marriage was said!

The *szlachta* used the opportunity presented by the discussion of the King's marriage to forward their plan of bringing the clergy, as they had brought the other classes of society, under their control. They had tried in vain to bring this about under Sigismund I, who, in spite of his tolerant spirit, remained to the end of his life the stanch supporter of the rights of the Church. When the marriage question came up the House of Nuncios asked the privilege of

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Bain, *Slavonic Europe*, p. 73.

meeting with the King without the presence of the Senators. The Chancellor objected that this was contrary to usage, but the King consented to it, and the meeting took place. Ever after the Nuncios considered it a precedent and from this time on claimed the *right* to meet separately with the King, and regarded their House as possessing powers distinct from those of the Diet as a whole. The story goes also that in this famous interview the Nuncios, in despair of moving the King concerning his marriage, fell upon their knees in a body before him. Greatly astonished at this unprecedented occurrence, the King rose from his seat and took off his hat. The Nuncios insisted on treating this unconscious act as a precedent and demanded that the King always receive any large body of the Nuncios uncovered. In the end the King was obliged to concede both points.

From this time the Senate lost its legislative predominance, which passed to the lower House. The more important matters that came to the Diet were considered in joint session by the two Houses, and their superiority of numbers gave the House of Nuncios the advantage in all these sessions. With the military and civil powers thus undermined, the King had very little to support his authority except tradition



and religious sentiment, and both these were seriously shaken by the Reformation.

As has been stated above, the Reformation had entered Poland during the reign of Sigismund I, and had made some progress, especially in the German parts of Poland, but it is doubtful if it would have proved a factor of great importance had it not been for the *szlachta's* jealousy of the power of the clergy and their recognition of the reform movement as a weapon with which to destroy it. Protestants, who from conviction refused to pay tithes, questioned the jurisdiction of the Church courts, and objected to the payment of annates and other papal contributions, were supported by the *szlachta* for political reasons irrespective of their own religious convictions, and the very worldly lives and lax faith of many of the more conspicuous of the Catholic clergy won a certain measure of popular approval for the reformers from those not especially interested in the political aspect of the case.

There existed on the statute books a number of edicts against heresy, some of them dating from the last reign, others from the period of the Hussite movement. Sigismund had no wish to see the Church weakened or the conservative forces in the state destroyed, and just after the

session of the second Diet, in 1550, he issued the famous edict by which he pledged himself to enforce the law of the land against heresy and to maintain the privileges of the clergy. The Bishops, regarding this as permission to persecute, summoned before their courts many persons suspected of heresy, as well as those who had refused to pay tithes and other Church dues. The *szlachta* were greatly alarmed and the Diet of Piotrkow (January, 1552) was a stormy one. The nobles were a unit, Catholic and Protestant alike, in opposition to the rights of bishops to summon *them* before their courts, and the opposition was so strong that the Bishops were very willing to accept the King's compromise proposal, which was that the jurisdiction of the Church courts be suspended for a year on condition that the gentry continued to pay their tithes during this period.

This meant that there was in Poland entire liberty to think, speak, and worship. The Church could as always decide upon the orthodoxy of a doctrine, and excommunicate heretics, but there their power ceased. They could neither try nor punish them. This freedom was so unprecedented in the sixteenth century that it drew to Poland reformers of every sect and of every shade of opinion. There were

fewer Lutherans than other sects, perhaps because of its German character; but Calvinists were very numerous and Socinians, Unitarians, and Waldensians were all represented. There was also a group that favored a National Church on Catholic lines, similar to the English Church under Henry VIII. The great majority of the Polish nobles, the greater as well as the lesser, were Protestant during the reign of Sigismund Augustus.

In Lithuania, especially, Nicholas Radziwill the Black, Palatine of Wilna and Chancellor of Lithuania, who became an ardent Calvinist, devoted his fortune as well as his enormous influence to advancing the cause, and succeeded in bringing over not only all the great families, Orthodox as well as Roman Catholic, but many of the Roman Catholic clergy as well. It is said that in Samogitia there were left only ten Catholic clergymen. Radziwill spent vast sums building Calvinist churches and colleges and having the Bible translated into Polish. This translation, known as the "Radziwill Bible," was printed in 1564. It is now a very rare book because the son of Radziwill, converted back to Catholicism, bought up, in so far as he could, the whole edition and had the books publicly burned in Wilna.

The result of the Protestantism of the nobility was that the Diets were overwhelmingly Protestant, and from 1552 to 1559 they made a strong effort to set up a National Reformed Church. The suspension of the ecclesiastical courts was indefinitely prolonged and most drastic proposals of reform were made, such as the exclusion of the Bishops from the Senate, and the calling of a synod to reform the Church, to which not only representatives of all sects within the kingdom were to be summoned, but to which all the chief reformers of Europe were to be invited — Calvin, Melanchthon, Beza, and Vergerius.

The Roman Catholic Church was saved from this very grave danger by practically one man, Stanislaus Bezdany, or, as he is better known, Hosius, the Grand Cardinal, who roused the Papacy to undertake the Counter-Reformation and finally introduced into Poland the newly formed Society of Jesus, actively to combat heresy. Nowhere did the Jesuits achieve a more conspicuous success, perhaps because the masses of the people both in Poland and in Lithuania were untouched by the reform movement, and the Jesuits had chiefly the upper classes to conquer. They ended by wiping out all sectarianism, getting possession of all the

schools, and becoming the dominating political influence.

The King was very favorable to the reformers, and some writers believe that had he lived longer he would have established a National Reformed Church. But his chief concern was to keep his kingdom at peace and save it from the horrors of civil wars of religion such as were devastating western Europe. His attitude and his enlightenment are well expressed in the following words in which he gives his reasons for granting permission to the Protestants to build a church in Cracow:—

“Considering the great calamities to which the largest and most flourishing Christian countries have recently been exposed, because their kings and princes have tried to suppress the different religious opinions which have arisen in our own time, we have resolved to prevent these dangers . . . from disturbing the peace and security of our realms, and from causing such excitement of the minds of people as would produce a civil war, particularly as we have become convinced, by the example of other countries in which so much Christian blood has been shed, that such severities are not only useless but even most injurious.”

To keep the peace, to reform abuses in

## 94 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

public administration, and to transform the somewhat unstable personal union of Poland and Lithuania into a real legislative union strong enough to withstand the pressure of dangers from without, — these were his ideals and to these he devoted his life. The union of the two states was achieved, only a short three years before his death, by the "Union of Lublin" in 1569. From 1386 the union of Poland and Lithuania had been personal only. Each country had its own Diet and was governed quite separately from the other. The point of union was that the hereditary Grand Duke of Lithuania was always elected King of Poland. This was of great advantage to Poland, as, though in theory an elective monarchy, in practice she had an hereditary kingship during these important years, and there were none of the contested elections that tore Poland to pieces in later centuries. By the Union of Lublin the two Diets became one, though each country kept its own separate army, court, laws, and administration. In order to meet the objections to the union based upon the inequalities of the two countries, the King resigned his hereditary rights to the throne of Lithuania, which became thereupon elective as Poland's was, and he extended to the members of the Lithuanian

Diet (far less privileged than the Polish) all the Polish rights and liberties. Henceforth the common Diet with the King ruled the country.

The jealousy that existed between the two countries led to the choice of a new place of meeting for the united Diet, and thus the creation of a new capital, Warsaw. As this town was in the Duchy of Masovia, only recently united to Poland, it was neither Polish nor Lithuanian and thus satisfactory to both countries. From this time on all the kings of Poland were elected on the field of Pola near Warsaw, and lived in Warsaw. But they were always crowned and buried at Cracow, Poland's old capital.

One of the most important events of the reign was the acquisition of Livonia. When, in 1466 at the Peace of Thorn, the Teutonic Order became subject to the King of Poland, the Knights of the Sword refused to accept the treaty and reverted to their original condition of a separate order, their Grand Master taking the place of the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order in the German Diet. Under the Grand Master Walter von Plattburg, the Knights of the Sword fought long and vigorously against Muscovy, and in 1502 made a truce for fifty years. During these years the Reformation spread throughout Livonia, including among

its converts the Grand Master and most of the Knights. During this same period also it lost much of its military vigor and thus became politically powerless at the very time that its commercial importance was making its conquest an ever greater temptation to the growing powers on its borders, Sweden, Muscovy, and Poland, all of whom were reaching out eagerly toward the Baltic. The end of the truce with Muscovy and the refusal of Ivan IV to renew it, except on terms that Livonia hesitated to accept, led to the invasion of the country by Ivan. The Knights appealed to Poland for help and by the Treaties of Wilna (1559) placed themselves under Polish protection. Their two southern provinces, Semigallia and Courland, were made into an hereditary Grand Duchy for the last Grand Master, Gothard von Ketler, who became a vassal of the Grand Duke of Lithuania. Their most northerly province, Esthonia, became a part of Sweden at this time, and John, Duke of Finland, the heir to the Swedish throne, was married in 1562 to Catharine, the fourth sister of King Sigismund. The treaty which contained these arrangements was of great importance. By it Sweden and Poland were united in common opposition to Muscovite ambition to reach and rule the



Baltic, and Poland for the first time in her history had the opportunity to make herself a sea power. The marriage of Catharine and John Vasa, Duke of Finland, also was to provide a new line of kings for Poland. On the other hand, it meant war with Muscovy, and the truce which closed the war in 1569 left Polotsk in the hands of the Muscovite, just as in the reign of Sigismund I, Smolensk had been left in her hands. Thus slowly but ever surely Muscovy pressed on.

[Under Sigismund Augustus, Poland reached the height of her prosperity. Territorially great and fairly well governed, her towns prosperous and still enjoying the greater part of their liberties, commerce and industry feeling an enormous impulse from the settlement in the country of skilled artisans whom religious persecutions had driven thither, the depression of the agricultural classes was not yet observable, and there were few signs to show that the beginning of a sure decline was so near.

The Jagiellon period is also Poland's great literary age. Her language during this period took on its modern literary form, and a great national literature gave it permanence and expressed the nation's sense of its own expanding life.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ELECTIVE MONARCHY THE ERA OF DECLINE, 1572-1763

WHEN King Sigismund died in July, 1572, without direct heirs, the crown, always elective in theory, became so in fact, and the nation had to choose a king.

It was two hundred years since Poland had had an interregnum, there was no authority legally constituted to act in such an emergency, and just at first no one seemed to know exactly what to do. The general confusion and disorder were so great that the King's mistress was able to run off with the crown jewels and all the royal treasure, so that the dead king lay in state in borrowed jewels and in clothes much wanting in sumptuousness. Factions among the nobility, partly religious, partly personal, not only prevented any common action in this crisis, but, on the contrary, led the kingless country to the verge of civil war, as no group was willing that any other should take the lead. Finally, however, all factions came together in the Convocation Diet which met in January, 1573. This Diet enacted that during an inter-

regnum the Primate should act as Interrex and call the Diets, and that the Grand Marshal should govern in the name of the Primate and the Senate. It also arranged religious differences by a law which put all Christian religions on an exact legal equality. Finally it set the meeting of the Election Diet for April, 1573. On the motion of John Zamoyski it was also decided, amid great enthusiasm, that the king should be elected, not by the regular Diet, but by all the *szlachta*; that is, that each noble should attend and cast his vote in person. This motion was the foundation of Zamoyski's enormous popularity and influence with the nobility, which made him the most powerful person in the republic during the next twenty-five years. He favored the vote *en masse* because it indicated the complete equality of the nobility — an idea for which he stood consistently all his life long.

It is not improbable, however, that the suggestion of this method of electing a king was made by the French Ambassador Montluc. He was already busy gathering votes for the French candidate to the vacant throne, the Duke of Anjou, brother of the French King, and, as he found the lesser nobles much the easier to win over, it was to his interest to have as many of them as possible at the election.

There were other foreign Powers beside France who aspired to the Polish throne on this occasion. Ivan IV of Muscovy, the King of Sweden, and the Duke of Prussia were all candidates, while the Emperor Maximilian II put forward his son the Archduke Ernest. The sentiment in Poland, however, was very general for a "Piast" or native Pole. When the Election Diet came together, the Protestants, who were in a majority, brought forward the name of John Firley, Grand Marshal and leader of the Polish Calvinists. But the opposition of two powerful Lutheran families, the Zborowskis and the Gorkas, so divided the Protestant vote that his election was impossible. The Papal Legate then very skillfully intervened and got the Zborowskis to support his Catholic candidate, the Archduke Ernest. Perceiving, however, that the feeling against the Habsburgs was so strong that the Archduke could not be elected, he threw his influence to the support of the Duke of Anjou, who was finally chosen.

A worse choice could scarcely have been made; Anjou had no interest in Poland and was wholly unsuited, both as regards character and political ideas, to reign there. He was simply the instrument used by the French Government to enlist Poland's support in the task of crush-

ing the Habsburg Power. It was the zeal and ability of the French Ambassador, and his unlimited use of both money and promises, that secured enough influence to carry the election for France.

Before electing the king the *szlachta* under Protestant leadership had "safeguarded the future of their liberties" by preparing a *pacta conventa* to which Henry of Anjou and succeeding kings had to swear, and which took away most of the attributes of royalty. By this the king agreed not to name his successor, neither to marry nor divorce his wife, neither to declare war nor send ambassadors to foreign courts, nor to levy taxes, without the approval of the Diet; he agreed also to govern through a permanent council of fourteen Senators chosen by the Diet, four of whom should always be with him; to call the Diet for a six weeks' session every two years; to keep the peace between religious sects and to protect them all equally. The *pacta* included also a provision that if the king failed to keep his oath in regard to any of these points, the nation, after duly warning him, was released from its obedience and at liberty to rebel against him.

The new King did not at all like these conditions and had no great wish to take up his new

duties. It was six months after the election before he reached Poland, and when he arrived he entered at once into the schemes of the extreme Catholics to omit the most obnoxious clauses of the oath (which he had already sworn to in Paris) from the coronation ceremony, and thus leave him a pretext on which to disregard them. As a matter of fact the crown was about to be placed on his head with no word said about religious liberty when Firley and the Chancellor Dembrinski stepped forward and refused to allow the ceremony to proceed unless the King took the whole oath. Firley took the crown in his own hands and said in loud voice, "If you will not swear you shall not reign." Thus coerced, the King took the oath, but it is doubtful if he would have kept it very long, and the death of his brother in June, 1574, and his own succession to the throne of France, probably saved Poland a civil war. As soon as he heard of his brother's death, Henry was eager to get to France and take up his new honors, but he could not leave Poland without the consent of the Diet and it took time to get the Diet together, so he resolved to run away! Late at night, after a great court entertainment, he left the castle by a private passage from his own rooms, found some French attendants who had

provided horses for him, and by riding all night was able to cross the frontier into Silesia before morning. A deputation of Polish noblemen was sent after him to beg him to return, but no amount of persuasion would induce him to resume so thorny a crown.

He was formally deposed in May, 1575, and Poland was obliged to choose another king. But party antagonism was even worse in this than in the previous interregnum, and it seemed as though agreement on any one candidate was an impossibility. Just at this point a terrible Tartar raid, which laid waste the rich fields of the Ukraine and took away fifty thousand captives, brought home to the Poles the necessity for a king and a government even if the king was not just the person of their choice. The Election Diet met at Warsaw in November, 1575, and after only a month of discussion and delay, Stephen Batory, Prince of Transylvania, was elected king by the *Izba*, or House of Nuncios, after two Piasts had been offered, and had prudently declined, the honor. The Senate, meanwhile, had yielded to the influence of the Papal Legate and elected the Emperor Maximilian. As neither king-elect was inclined to yield, the death of Maximilian relieved a difficult situation and made Stephen's throne secure.

The affection of the country for the Jagiellon family had made Stephen's election conditional upon his marrying the Princess Anna, sister of Sigismund Augustus, which he did, and she was crowned with him May 1, 1576.

Danzig alone in the whole country objected to the new monarch. "The Pearl of Poland" favored the Emperor on account of her trade which the burghers believed the German connection would greatly enhance. So she shut her gates and refused to recognize Stephen, who spent the first six months of his reign besieging the city. After its surrender the King imposed a heavy fine, but removed all rancor by wisely confirming all privileges and immunities.

This task accomplished, the King was free to give his attention to foreign affairs which were both critical and delicate. Tartars and Muscovites were invading Polish territory and the *szlachta* were clamorous for the restoration of peace, but were quite unable to see that the only way to get it was to conquer both enemies. In all of Europe the Poles could have found no one better fitted than King Stephen to deal with the situation. As Prince of Transylvania, he had filled a difficult and precarious throne where the continued existence of the independence of his country depended upon his exact



knowledge of the policies of Europe, and his ability to play one power against another and gain from all. No monarch in Europe was more intimately informed as to the conditions and policies of both Turkey and Muscovy as well as those of the Western Powers. Of Slav origin himself he spoke the Polish language fluently, and understood, perhaps instinctively, the Polish character. Not being known in Poland all factions believed him favorable to them, and Stephen skillfully avoided committing himself on irritating questions and used his popularity to get things done.

His foreign policy was directly opposed to the non-intervention sentiment of the *szlachta*. To him it was an obvious fact that Muscovy and Turkey menaced the future existence of Poland as a great state. The Turks in alliance with the Crimean Tartars had cut Poland's communications with the Black Sea, were a constant menace to her southern provinces, and had already torn away from Polish influence the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia; while the realization of Muscovy's claims on all the Russian parts of Lithuania, and of her ambitions to reach and control the Baltic coast, would reduce Poland to a land-locked state of small dimensions and little importance. He had no

idea of submitting to these conditions. On the contrary, he meant to destroy the Muscovite Empire and drive the Turk from Europe. As, however, the Turkish question was a European matter and needed time to arrange, he made a temporary peace. He continued the subsidies paid to the Tartars by Sigismund II, on condition that they keep the peace with Poland and serve her in case of war. He then turned his attention to Muscovy.

Under Ivan III and his son, Vasily III, Muscovy had thrown off the Tartar yoke, gathered most of the Russian "lands" under her rule, and under Ivan IV had conquered the Tartar strongholds of Kazan and Astrakan, which had continually threatened her on the southeast. With their conquest the Volga became a Russian river, and all the region of the Caspian and beyond lay open to the expanding might of the youthful Russian state. But Ivan, like Peter the Great after him, saw that Russia must be in contact with the West if she would be great, and he fixed his eyes on Livonia, which would give him a Baltic outlet with towns, fortresses, and western European trade. His failure to achieve it and its subsequent annexation to Poland has been considered in a previous chapter. In the anarchy in Poland which followed Sigis-

mund's death, Ivan saw an opportunity to win it back, and in 1575 he invaded the country. It was not until 1579 that Stephen could go against him, but in that year he declared war and led an army into Livonia to drive out the Muscovites and conquer Polock, which would keep open Livonia's communications with Lithuania. The Diet had, quite characteristically, refused to make any grant for the war, but now, as all through his reign, Stephen carried out his plans without much reference to the Diet and found the money somehow. It took three campaigns, lasting nearly three years, to induce the Czar to cede Livonia and Polock, but Stephen accomplished it, though he had to borrow from the Electors of Saxony and Brandenburg, and from his vassal the Duke of Prussia, in order to pay his soldiers. His army was largely mercenaries, Hungarian and German, but he had also an army sent by his brother, the Prince of Transylvania, and a number of the great nobles, won over to the King by his genius and character, sent him their private armies. The King also added a number of regiments of infantry to the Polish army. As the nobles refused to serve except as cavalry, the King enrolled the peasants on the crown lands as infantry, freeing them and their

posterity from certain dues when they enlisted, and after three campaigns making them entirely free. The King also made a point of ennobling those who distinguished themselves, with the result that the infantry became both an effective and popular branch of the service.

The *szlachta* were more dismayed than pleased or grateful over the King's victories. They accused him of all sorts of evil conduct and ambitions, but the peasants recognized his greatness. When he returned to Poland after his second victory over Ivan IV, he was received as a hero by the peasants all along his journey, whole villages turning out to greet him. When he reached Warsaw, all the bells were ringing and the people insisted that the great bell of Warsaw distinctly pronounced the name of King Stephen! Even the Diet, which had previously resolved not to grant him a penny, was carried away by the general enthusiasm and made him quite a decent grant.

The death of Ivan IV, shortly after the signing of the Truce of Zapolsk (January, 1582) which gave Livonia and Polock to Poland, gave King Stephen hopes of carrying out a great European scheme of conquering Muscovy altogether and incorporating it with Poland, uniting Poland and Hungary, and driving the

Turk from Europe. The Pope, Sixtus V, to whom he opened his scheme, had agreed to furnish the money for the enterprise, and negotiations with Austria, which was to have Transylvania as the price of assistance, and with Denmark, were already under way when the King fell ill and died very suddenly.

The lawlessness of the magnates and the absence of all responsibility for the public welfare on the part of the *szlachta*, in whose hands all the powers lay, convinced King Stephen as they had convinced other kings that some reform of the Constitution was essential to any future development of the country, and he was on the point of submitting a programme of reform to the Diet as a necessary preliminary to his big foreign adventure, when he died.

All during his reign he combated lawlessness in high places. He insisted on obedience to the law from all men of all ranks, and stood solidly behind all his officials who found it difficult, sometimes even dangerous, to enforce it. The famous case of Samuel Zborowski is a typical instance of this sort. During the reign of King Henry this representative of one of the greatest and also the most lawless of Polish magnate families stabbed and killed a Senator within the

precincts of the royal castle, and by the clemency of the King was exiled, merely, instead of hanged as the law provided. Under King Stephen he returned to Poland and lived openly in Cracow. Zamoyski, as Starost of Cracow, warned him to go or he would be arrested and executed according to the law. Zborowski impudently ignored the warning, and Zamoyski arrested him and after a trial of scrupulous fairness over which the King himself presided, he was condemned and executed (1584). His family at once sought vengeance. They came to the Diet of 1585, to which they had referred their cause, with a great army of retainers determined to overawe both Diet and King. But the King and Zamoyski also brought troops and, with a determination quite equal to theirs, carried on the struggle in the Diet and won from that body not only confirmation of the justice of Samuel's execution, but the banishment of Christopher Zborowski, Samuel's companion in lawlessness and treason. Much of the disaffection of the Zborowski was the result of their personal antagonism to Zamoyski, their jealousy of the power given him, and the personal favor shown him by King Stephen. This antagonism was increased a hundred-fold by the events just recorded and was one of the

chief elements of disorder in the early part of the next reign.

In religious matters the King was himself a Catholic, but was entirely tolerant. He bestowed favors and rewards with absolute disregard of religious lines and repressed intolerance in others with severity. Friends and foes agree that Stephen was a great ruler. "There was no kind of glory which Poland did not possess under him," and the all-too-short ten years of his reign had shown what Poland might be under a king who was able to give her, whether she wanted it or not, strong and efficient government.

In all his undertakings, whether of war or of peace, John Zamoyski was the King's right-hand man, almost, indeed, his second self. Zamoyski's personal qualities endeared him to the King, who married him to his niece, Griselda, and took him into his personal intimacy, while his preëminent abilities as general, statesman, and administrator, and his great influence with the *szlachta*, made him an invaluable public servant. The greatest offices in the gift of the Crown were bestowed upon him, and he exercised an authority such as no citizen had ever had before. As Castellan of Cracow he was the first of the lay Senators; as Starost of the same

province he had criminal jurisdiction over all Little Poland; as Grand Hetman of the Crown he was Commander-in-Chief of the army, while as Chancellor he was the Keeper of the Great Seal, the guardian of the Constitution.

There is no question of the value of his services to Poland, but, on the other hand, he was extremely jealous of his dignity, far from scrupulous in his methods, and all too prone to regard opposition to his policies as treachery to the State. It is small wonder that he had enemies besides the Zborowski, and of quite a different sort, and, natural enough, that all of them should join together after the death of King Stephen in an attempt to curtail his power. The Primate Karnkowski, an old man of seventy, and completely under the influence of the Zborowski, wrote to Zamoyski, who was in the Ukraine with the army, not to come to the Convocation Diet, and it was hoped that the election of the new king could take place without him. Zamoyski, however, had quite other intentions, and when the Election Diet met in June, 1587, he was not only there, but he had the whole southern army with him.

There were three important candidates for the throne on this occasion: the Czar of Muscovy, the Archduke Maximilian, brother of the



Emperor Rudolph II, and Sigismund Vasa, son of King John of Sweden and of Catharine Jagiello, sister of Sigismund II. Zamoyski supported the claims of the Swedish prince, and his influence was, perhaps, the decisive factor in the election. The Zborowski and their faction were in favor of Maximilian, while the majority of the Lithuanians supported the Czar. Factional feeling had never been so bitter, and all the factions came with armies behind them<sup>1</sup> so that the field of election was a great armed camp. This had, indeed, been true of the elections of both Henry of Valois and of Stephen Batory, but in neither case were the numbers or the animosities so great. The remark of a foreign observer about the election of Henry of Valois, that it looked far more like an assemblage "come together to conquer a foreign kingdom than to dispose of their own," was equally applicable here.

The Primate Karnkowski, after long delay, finally took the side of the Swedish prince, partly because he was the popular candidate (the majority of the Poles supported him on account of his Jagiellon blood and because his election would mean a close alliance of Sweden

<sup>1</sup> The Zborowski had ten thousand foreign mercenaries sent by the Archduke as well as the private armies of their Polish supporters.

## 114 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

and Poland against Muscovy), partly also because he feared that under Austrian rule Poland would lose her liberties and be drawn into war against the Turks in the interests of Austria. He therefore proposed Sigismund in the Senate. At this Zborowski led out his troops. Zamoy-ski did likewise and a battle seemed inevitable when the Primate, old and infirm as he was, mounted a horse and rode alone between the lines and besought them in the name of their common fatherland not to disgrace the nation by civil war. The appeal was effective, and both sides retired to quarters and contented themselves by each side proclaiming its candidate king! Zamoy-ski fortified Cracow and sat down to hold it until the Prince of Sweden should arrive.

The King of Sweden had always hoped to have his son King of Poland, and had educated him with this idea in view, but when he heard of the difficulties of the election, of the opposition of the Emperor, and especially of the condition imposed by the Polish Diet of Election that Sweden must renounce her claims on Esthonia, he refused to allow his son to accept the throne.<sup>1</sup> It was only when his ambassadors

<sup>1</sup> Poland claimed Esthonia as part of the territory of the Order of the Sword, but the country had been occupied by Sweden, and Poland had never been able to make good her claim.

returned from the election and told him that his arch-enemy the Czar of Muscovy would be elected unless Sigismund accepted, and also assured him that the Poles would give way on Esthonia, that he reluctantly allowed the Prince to accept and to start for Poland. He made him promise, however, not to land in Poland until the Poles should definitely resign their claims on Esthonia. For five days after his arrival, therefore, the King-elect sat on his ship in the harbor of Danzig waiting for the Poles to yield! But the delegates sent to meet him had no authority to decide a point of such importance, and finally Sigismund accepted the compromise that the matter should be left as it was during the lifetime of his father. When he got to Cracow he told the Senate he would resign the crown rather than cede Esthonia, and they yielded the point in view of the danger from Maximilian and the necessity of a close alliance of Sweden and Poland against Muscovy. Sigismund was crowned December 27, 1587, but Maximilian refused to recognize him, and it was only after Zamoyski had fought Maximilian and taken him prisoner that he agreed to renounce all his claims to the Polish throne.

The new King was a cultured, highly educated, and politically intelligent young man.

## 116 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

His political programme, which he brought with him ready-made from Sweden, was based upon a clear understanding of the needs of Poland, but unfortunately he had not the strength of will and he never achieved the personal popularity by which alone a Polish monarch could overcome the handicaps of his position and accomplish anything. The childhood of the young King (he was only twenty-one when he was crowned) had been extraordinary and not without an element of tragedy. He was born in prison where his parents were confined by the half-mad King Erick of Sweden, who feared Sigismund's father would seize the throne. Sigismund's mother was an ardent and devout Roman Catholic, and not only brought up her son in her faith, but greatly influenced her husband in that direction. When after Erick's death he became king, he admitted the Jesuits to Sweden and allowed his son to be educated by them. The King's religious feeling was not, however, very deep, and after the Queen's death he yielded to the influence of a strongly Protestant country, expelled the Jesuits, and began to persecute Roman Catholics. Sigismund was subjected to what might be called persecution also in the effort to make him Protestant, but the young Prince clung to

his religion and to his Jesuit friends with all his might, and their influence became the dominating one of his whole life. Grave beyond his years, cold and self-contained, neither asking nor taking advice, he was never liked by the genial, open-natured Poles. His religion also was a great disappointment to the Protestants of Poland, who were greatly in the majority in the governing class. Instead of supporting Protestantism as they had hoped, he became its strongest opponent in the north, gave his Jesuit friends a free hand, and during his reign religious persecution for the first time entered Poland's doors. It was, however, persecution in its milder forms; there was no bloodshed, no horrors as in Spain or France, but the change that took place can be seen from the fact that when Sigismund came to the throne the vast majority of the Senators were Protestant, and when he died there were only two who still held to that faith. As a Catholic also he believed in authority, and he spent his life in the struggle to arrest the democratic movement and establish strong government in Poland.

In foreign policy he held the views of King Stephen as to the necessity of conquering both Turks and Muscovites, and attempted to form a league of the Catholic Powers, headed by

## 118 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

Austria and the Pope, in order to carry them out. This brought him into direct opposition to Zamoyski and to the majority of the *szlachta*, who regarded Austria — the representative of that German peril against which their ancestors had fought unceasingly — as the arch-enemy of Poland and the only serious menace to her safety. Against this determined opposition the King had to struggle during his whole reign of nearly fifty years.

‡ The King's marriage to an Austrian arch-duchess and the persistent rumor (which was entirely true) that he was negotiating with Austria with the idea of giving up the Polish throne to the Archduke Maximilian, threw the whole country into great excitement. Zamoyski even got the Diet of 1590 to pass an act expressly excluding the Archduke from the succession. But no sooner had the Diet risen than the opposing party, led by the Primate, formed a "Confederation" which protested against the acts of the Diet of 1590, and especially against the power of Zamoyski. An extraordinary Diet, called by the King at the end of the year, reversed all the acts of its predecessor and greatly weakened Zamoyski's influence by depriving him of the Grand Hetmanship and the Castellanate of Cracow, and replacing many of his

friends at court with supporters of the King's policies. By June, 1592, however, Zamoyski had sufficiently recovered from this blow to call a "Confederation" of his own at Jendrzow, which brought up once more the question of the King's Austrian intrigues and protested vigorously against his "treachery." As all the *szlachta*, the Senators of Great and Little Poland, and most of the Orthodox Lithuanians were now supporting Zamoyski, the Diet of 1592, the so-called "Inquisition Diet," which met to investigate the charges against the King, was largely composed of his men. For weeks this investigation continued. In the course of it the King was hectored like a bad schoolboy in the hands of an old-fashioned teacher, and the way in which he kept both his temper and his dignity was much to his credit. The Primate in the course of a speech made the following remarks to the King, which show very clearly the extraordinary self-complacency as well as the lack of manners of the assembly:—

"Remember, most serene King, your oath and the example of your predecessor, Henry of Valois, who, having broken it, miserably perished. You are reigning over a free people, over nobles who have not their equals in any other nation. Are you not aware that you

stand much higher than your father, who, I am told, reigns only over peasants? Remember what our late King Stephen of glorious memory used to say, 'I shall some day put down those Swedish kinglings and teach them how to behave.'"

Before the Diet was over, the Austrian party, led by the young Queen's mother, the Archduchess Maria, a very shrewd statesman, saw that Zamoyski was too powerful to be disregarded and must therefore be conciliated. Accordingly, through the Palatine of Cracow, the King made his peace with his Chancellor and restored to him the Grand Hetmanship. No wiser move could have been made, as it enabled the King to use to the full during the next ten years the really great abilities of the greatest of his subjects.

In 1602, however, all Zamoyski's suspicions of "Habsburg intrigues" were again aroused by the King's proposal to marry as a second wife the sister of his first wife, who had died in 1599, and in the Diet of 1603, Zamoyski was once again the leader of the party of opposition to the King. By this time dissatisfaction with the King had become very general, and the opposition of Zamoyski was but the beginning of a struggle between king and *szlachta* that lasted,



with few intermissions, for the next six years. There were many reasons for this opposition. It greatly offended the Poles that, since the death of the Dowager Queen Catharine, the old Polish ways had been given up, and the court to all outward appearance was German. It was openly charged that the King intended to make the monarchy hereditary, and greatly to curtail the "liberties" of the *szlachta*, thus violating both the Constitution and his coronation oath, and that the Germans at his Court were to help him do it. Religious persecution, also, which deprived Protestants and Orthodox of all places of trust and power and made it very difficult for them to own and maintain public places of worship or other property, was deeply resented, as was also the establishment of the Uniate Church in Poland. Poland had never accepted the Union of Florence, and when it was practically forced upon her by the King and his Jesuit advisers in 1594, the Orthodox people of the southwestern provinces were on the verge of revolt. The Diet also objected to the King's foreign policy, and to the fact that the troops were not paid, and charged him with using the money voted for the latter purpose for his own private expenses. All these matters and many others were discussed with vehemence and

great dramatic effect in the Diets of 1603 and 1605, but nothing was done, and the only result was increased irritation of all parties. Zamoy-ski died in 1605, shortly after the close of the Diet, and his leadership was assumed by Zebrzydowski, under whom the quarrel soon assumed the form of civil war. Zamoy-ski, in his last public speech in the Diet of 1605, had threatened to depose the King if he did not mend his ways. Zebrzydowski led the movement to do it.

As in many other mediæval parliaments the decisions of the Polish Diet were considered as expressing the "sense of the [whole] meeting," as the Quakers, who have always maintained this usage, put it, and not, as in modern legislative assemblies, the will of a dominant majority. A determined minority could always prevent action to which they objected, but unless the minority was large or very determined, little attention was paid to it, and it was not until the late sixteenth century that the practice of unanimity in voting led to serious inconveniences. In Sigismund's reign, however, unanimity was obviously impossible, and as long as it remained the rule no legislative action could take place. In 1606 the King called the Diet for the express purpose of changing

the Constitution in this respect and providing for majority decisions. Zebrzydowski at once called a "Confederation" to protest against this change "so destructive to personal liberty," and great numbers of the most influential nobility attended. After a few weeks of debate the assembly turned itself into a *Rokosz* or "Insurrection" (an armed opposition to the king permitted by the Constitution when the king had violated its provisions and had been warned by the Senate), which proposed to dethrone the King and put the Protestant Prince of Transylvania in his place. The King met the situation with energy. He summoned his troops from the Ukraine, and after issuing a manifesto condemning the insurrection took the field against the rebels and defeated them at Janowiec (September, 1606). He then offered pardon to all who would lay down their arms. Zebrzydowski wished to continue the struggle, but his troops obliged him to appear before the King's representatives. Being assured that the King was not a traitor, wishing to give the Kingdom to Austria, or to establish absolutism, he consented to renew his allegiance. Having kissed the King's hand he addressed his sovereign in the following words: "God . . . be my witness that all I have done was

with the intention of serving the public weal, and I promise my allegiance in the firm hope that Your Majesty will satisfy the wishes of the nation." Radziwill, next in insurgent command, then spoke and ended thus: "Whatever I did was done, not from any want of respect for Your Royal Majesty but following the example of our ancestors, I stood up for our liberties: and these as a true noble, I shall ever defend at the risk of my life."

A delegation from the army of the insurgents also sought an audience with the King; their spokesman made the following address: "We are freemen and born in a free country. We were taught by our parents that whenever it concerned the preservation of our liberties and rights, we should be ready to sacrifice our lives and property. Believing these liberties to be in danger, we threw ourselves as it were into the midst of a general conflagration in order to extinguish it. Having now learned that Your Majesty never had any intention against these liberties, we are grateful for it, and come to request Your Majesty's pardon for the actions we have done, they having been done with good intention."

But all this eloquence and these pledges amounted to nothing. The trouble broke out

afresh the next year, and a second *Rokosz* was formed, which renounced its allegiance to King Sigismund and proclaimed the Prince of Transylvania King of Poland. Once again the King defeated the rebels in the field, but it was not until 1609 that quiet was finally restored by a general amnesty. This meant that the King's attempt to introduce a system of voting which should make constructive legislation feasible had failed, and in discouragement he gave up all further attempts at constitutional reform, and turned his attention to foreign affairs.

But here again the Diet's jealousy of its "golden liberty" and the popular fear of the designs of Austria prevented the seizure of a moment of unique opportunity to deal fatal blows to Poland's natural and inevitable enemies, the Turks and the Muscovites, and to secure her position on the Baltic seaboard. In 1592, on the death of his father, Sigismund had become King of Sweden, but his Catholicism made him unpopular with his intensely Protestant subjects, and in 1598 they dethroned him and put his uncle, Prince Charles of Sudermania, who had acted as viceroy for Sigismund, on the throne. When Sigismund refused to acknowledge him or to give up his own claims to the throne, the Swedes invaded Livonia. But

Zamoyski, with his two great subordinates, Zolkiewski and Chodkiewicz, reconquered much of the country and were well on their way to take the whole of it when the troops mutinied because they were not paid. For two years Zamoyski tried in vain to get either money or reinforcements from the Diet; finally Chodkiewicz out of his own pocket paid for mercenaries with whom he managed to wring a sensational victory from the Swedes at Kirkholm in September, 1605, and saved Livonia for Poland.

For a war with Turkey the time was very propitious as dynastic dissensions had made her weak, and Tartar raids into Polish territory, as well as Turkish interference in the border states of Wallachia and Moldavia, offered constant occasion for war. Moldavia, it will be recalled, had been under the protection of Poland since the early fifteenth century, and though the Turks had since then overrun the country and received the homage of its rulers, the Polish claim had never been abandoned, and could always be revived from time to time as occasion offered. But it was in the Crimean Tartars that Turkey had her best weapon against Poland. Bold and cunning, swift, ruthless, and always eager to fight, they were ideal

raiders of an unprotected border, and the fact that they were known to be very independent and difficult to control made it always possible for Turkey to disclaim responsibility for them when responsibility was inconvenient. Zamoyski was right in his position that to pursue the Tartars into the Crimea itself and defeat them on their own ground was the only way effectively to guard the border against them, but the Diet steadily refused to vote money for such an expedition, though they had in the Cossacks of the Ukraine material for an ideal border militia. The Ukraine, or border, was the name given to the vast tract of territory that extended roughly from the mouth of the river Pripet to the cataracts of the Dnieper, some miles below Kiev. The constant exposure of this territory to invasion from the steppe had developed certain special characteristics in the inhabitants who, in self-defense, had learned the cunning of the Tartars, were marvelous riders, shots, and swimmers, very skillful in warfare of the guerrilla type and very difficult to bring under restraint. This type of frontiersman became known as a Cossack (or freebooter or robber), a name that was at first used as a term of reproach, but later became very honorable.

In the reign of Sigismund I the Cossacks (the name was given to the whole border population at this time) first organized themselves for the defense of the border. The organization was entirely voluntary and unpaid; it elected its own officers, including the commander-in-chief, or *ataman*, and decided in general assembly the policy to be pursued. King Stephen saw the great importance of the Cossacks and made them a part of the regular army, giving them a fixed pay, the use of certain pieces of land, and establishing a regular method of recruiting. Henceforth they were known as the "registered" Cossacks. They continued to elect their own *atamans*, but the election was subject to the King's approval. They always steadily refused to pay taxes or to do service for their land, and during the years when all the other Slav peasantry, both Russian and Polish, was bound in serfdom, they remained really free and practically independent, for even after they were taken into Polish pay they never could be induced to fight for causes they did not like. They never failed to defend the lower classes of both Russia and Poland against the nobles and they never could be kept from fighting the Tartars whenever an opportunity offered. When Poland was at peace with the



Sultan she was often seriously embarrassed by this propensity.

The Zaporoghian Cossacks were a body quite distinct from the "registered" and bore somewhat the relation to them that a standing army does to the militia. The name "Zaporoghians" means "behind the cataracts," or falls, and refers to their settlements on the islands of the Dnieper below the cataracts. The early history of this group is obscure, but it undoubtedly originated in the necessity of keeping an advanced guard against the Tartars on these lonely islands. In the course of time this guard became a permanent settlement, living a life of hunting, fishing, and fighting. The settlement was known as the *Setch*, and was entirely self-governing and republican. A general assembly of the whole community elected all the officers including the chief *ataman*, who was absolute in time of war, but in peace was merely chief of his staff. The discipline was strict — the murder of a comrade, bringing a woman into the camp, and a number of other offenses were punished with death, while thieves were tied to posts in the midst of the camp so that everybody could hit them as they passed by. Though no women were allowed in the settlement, many Cossacks kept their wives and families

near by, and many of them brought their sons to be brought up as Cossacks.

Fighting was their profession and chief occupation. They acknowledged the sovereignty of the King of Poland and regarded themselves as his army, but, as has been said above, in common with all the Cossacks they used their judgment as to when to fight for him. Though the majority of the Cossacks were Ukranians, many people of other nations, especially Russians and Poles, joined them — young men of good family who wanted adventure; exiles or outlaws; peasants who found their lot too hard; and all those who wished to lose themselves and forget their past. Like all the Ukranians most of the Cossacks were Orthodox, and under Sigismund III and his successors Orthodox peasants in large numbers fled to their ranks to escape religious persecution. Thither likewise fled many from both Russia and Poland to escape the chains of serfdom and the tyranny of the overlords.

The *szlachta* deeply resented the existence of this refuge for their serfs and feared a body so entirely independent of their control as the Cossacks were. They were never willing to vote money for a great Cossack expedition against the Turks and Tartars, but instead

limited the policy of the Government to keeping order on the border, and to do it Polish generals were obliged to turn their arms oftentimes *against* the Cossacks instead of using *them* against the common enemy. The result of this disastrous and suicidal policy was ultimately to throw the whole Polish Ukraine into the arms of Russia.

All during the reign of Sigismund his Hetman fought a continual and losing fight against the Tartars and the chronically rebellious Cossacks for the peace of the border, and was rewarded by suspicion and ingratitude. Zolkiewski, after forty years of service, a part of the time at his own private expense, was accused of protracting the wars for his private advantage. Faithful to Poland, he died in 1618 at the head of a little band of Poles who, deserted by their comrades, were cut to pieces by the Turks, who had now become strong enough to take the offensive and were invading Poland with all their forces.

This terrible disaster roused even the Diet which, with unprecedented generosity, voted something more than half enough money to finance a campaign! Under the Grand Hetman of Lithuania, Chodkiewicz, of Livonian fame, and with the assistance of the Cossacks, the

Turks were defeated and forced to a truce (1619) that kept peace between the two states for nearly forty years.

Meanwhile events of dramatic and far-reaching importance had drawn Poland into a war with Muscovy. Shortly after the death of Ivan IV, Muscovy fell into a state of anarchy that bade fair to destroy her. The successor of Ivan IV on the Russian throne was his son Theodore, a weakling both physically and mentally, under whom the government was carried on by the Czar's brother-in-law, Boris Godunov, who ruled so well that after Theodore's death a national assembly elected him czar. The way had been paved for this by Boris himself, who during the life of Theodore had had the Czar's half-brother Dmitri, the last of the direct heirs to the throne, murdered. Boris had hoped to found a dynasty, but the great nobles, or *boyars*, never liked him, and some time before his death in 1605, were already planning to supplant him. To prepare the way they spread the news that the Czarevitch Dmitri had not died, that it was another child who had been killed in his place, and that the Czarevitch himself was in Lithuania and about to return to claim the throne of his fathers. After Boris's death this Pretender succeeded to the throne amid great

popular rejoicing. It has never been discovered who he was. That he was a Great Russian and sincerely believed himself to be the Czarevitch Dmitri, and that he was a wise, able, and independent ruler, there is no doubt at all. But the *boyars*, who had hoped for a facile tool, were greatly disappointed and began at once to plot to overthrow him also. In less than a year he was murdered and Prince Vassily Shuiski put in his place. But Shuiski was not the choice of all the *boyars*. His lack of any title to the throne made him unpopular in the country at large, and rival *boyars* saw their opportunity to produce a new Pretender who claimed that he also was Dmitri once more miraculously escaped from death! There was little belief in his claims, — he was an adventurer pure and simple, — but he was proclaimed czar and set up his camp at Tushino from which he was popularly known as “The Thief of Tushino.” There were now two czars, Shuiski at Moscow and “The Thief” at Tushino.

In the whole Russian domestic difficulty the Poles had taken a large, though not at first an official, part. It was in Poland at the court of Prince Adam Wisniowiecki that the False Dmitri had first laid public claim to his title, and here and elsewhere in Poland his claims were

recognized and kingly honors were accorded him. He was converted to Roman Catholicism by the Franciscans and betrothed to Maria, the eldest daughter of the Palatine of Sandomir, during the year 1603, and early in 1604 was presented to King Sigismund at Cracow. Sigismund did not see his way to recognize him publicly, but acknowledged him privately and paid him a small pension. His future father-in-law then took up his cause, collected an army of Poles and Cossacks, and started out to place him on the throne of Muscovy. The Diet of 1605 protested vehemently against this expedition, and recalled the Palatine and his troops. But the Cossacks, who formed more than half his force, refused to return, and with them the Pretender proceeded on his way, winning many to his side as he went. "The Thief" at Tushino also had many Poles in his army, and many Cossacks were drawn to his support by the fact that all the lower classes in Muscovy were supporting him and that under him a great peasant and Slav rising was taking place.

The horrors inflicted on the country by "The Thief" and his Cossack allies were indescribable, and Shuiski called in the Swedes to help him restore order, ceding Carelia to them and renouncing all Muscovy's claims on Livonia in

return. At this King Sigismund insisted on intervening, though the Diet was still indifferent. Zolkiewski led an army against Shuiski, defeated and took him prisoner, and received the proposition of the *boyars* to place Prince Wladislaus, the son of King Sigismund, on the Muscovite throne.

Zolkiewski managed the matter with great skill. He got the *boyars* to render homage to him as the representative of the Prince, to send a deputation of their most distinguished men to confer with King Sigismund as to the terms on which his son could accept the Muscovite throne, and to admit the Polish army to the Kremlin of Moscow, thus giving them control of the city. But the King could not allow him to accept and protect Orthodoxy, without which the Muscovites would not accept him, so after months of futile negotiation the conference broke up. Meanwhile a great popular movement was sweeping over Muscovy — a movement that was essentially religious and was led by the clergy — in opposition to the rule of a foreigner, and a schismatic. A national assembly met and elected Michael Romanoff czar, thus founding a new dynasty and at the same time ending the only opportunity the Poles ever had of ruling in Muscovy.

It was only when the opportunity was gone that the Diet was willing to fight! They voted money for a year's campaign and sent Chodkiewicz and the young Prince off "to conquer Muscovy." But the Polish troops were badly equipped to stand a Russian winter and the Muscovites were too exhausted to carry on a long campaign, so after a few months of fighting the Truce of Deulino (1618) was arranged by which the Poles recognized Michael as czar, and Muscovy ceded Smolensk and the great province of Novgorod-Severski to Poland.

Just at this time the Swedes under Sigismund's great cousin, King Gustavus Adolphus, were invading and laying waste Livonia. Gustavus realized that Sigismund's real interest in both Sweden and Livonia was to bring them under the influence of the Counter-Reformation, and he regarded the conquest of Livonia and the maintenance of his dynasty in Sweden as an integral part of the great struggle for Protestantism, as whose champion a few years later he entered the Thirty Years' War. Success in Livonia led to the invasion of both East and West Prussia, and Gustavus soon had practically the whole country, with the exception of Danzig, in his hands. Here again it was the fatal blindness of the Polish Diet that permitted



this to happen. In Stanislaus Koniecpolski the Poles had a general worthy of Poland's best military traditions; in spite of heavy odds he won some brilliant victories in the Swedish war, and had the Diet supported him, the task of the Swedes would have been much more difficult, and the outcome might have been very different. But the Diet never grasped the significance of the war, and in 1629 made the Truce of Altmark, which left not only Livonia, but most of the Prussian coast as well, with its important trading towns of Elbing, Braunsberg, and Memel, in Swedish hands.

During the last years of his reign the King took little part in public affairs. He died in 1632, disillusioned and disappointed, seeing only too plainly the abyss toward which the country was headed and the powerlessness of her monarchs to save her.

Sigismund was succeeded by his son Wladislaus IV (1632-1648), who united many of the great qualities of the Vasa race with a thoroughly Polish temperament. It was the dream of his life to win the Muscovite crown that in his early youth had been almost within his grasp. He was an able and experienced general, a great favorite with the Cossacks as well as with the regular army, and the breaking of

the Truce of Deulino by the Muscovites as soon as they heard of his father's death seemed to offer him his opportunity. But the Diet refused absolutely to vote money for the war, and it was only by pawning his father's crown and selling to the Elector of Brandenburg (who had succeeded to the Duchy of Prussia and was therefore his vassal) exemption from doing homage in person for his duchy, that the King was able to raise enough money to go to the relief of Smolensk, which the Muscovites were besieging. Although he won a brilliant victory before Smolensk, news that the Turks were attacking in the south convinced the King that he could not take the offensive against Moscow at this time, and he agreed to a peace (March, 1634) by which territorial arrangements were left as they had been before the war, Muscovy paid a large indemnity, and Wladislaus recognized Michael as czar.

The Turks proved less troublesome than the King had feared, and in October, 1634, a fairly advantageous peace was made with them.

Meanwhile the death of Gustavus Adolphus and the entrance of France into the Thirty Years' War had led both sides to negotiate with King Wladislaus. Though the Diet refused to consider Poland's going to war with them, the

Protestant allies were willing to pay well for her neutrality, and by the Truce of Stuhmsdorf (September, 1635) Poland recovered all the Prussian territories conquered from her by Gustavus Adolphus, and Sweden agreed to return Livonia after the war.

The constant interference of the Diet with every phase of his policy, their parsimony, stupidity, and lack of interest in everything except their own powers and prerogatives, led the King to plan the destruction of their power by force. The Order of the Immaculate Conception, formed from among the younger magnates and sanctioned by the Pope, was intended to be the nucleus of a royalist party which should aid the King in this project. But the Diet, aided in this instance by all the Protestants and the Orthodox Lithuanians, raised such a commotion that the King was obliged to abolish the Order. He then turned to the Cossacks, with whom he was very popular, and planned to use them to carry out a *coup d'état* by means of which power should be taken forcibly from the *szlachta* and put into his hands. To create circumstances which should be an excuse for such a revolution, he planned to bring about a war with the Turks and, contrary to the *pacta conventa*, he made a

secret alliance with Venice to aid him in such a war. The Turks, however, carefully avoided war, and Venice spoiled the whole plan by betraying the existence of the secret treaty. The Diet of 1646, declaring that a Turkish war would be "the grave of the national liberties," reduced the army and forbade the King to make war without their consent. But the King did not give up. He kept his army ready for action and continued his negotiations with the Cossacks, in the hope that his chance might still come. The Cossacks, however, got tired of waiting, and, in 1648, their Hetman Bogdan Chmielnicki made an alliance with the Tartars and invaded Poland. It is possible that the King might have been able to use this revolt for his own purposes, but he had no time to try. He died very suddenly just as it broke out, and his successor was left to deal with what proved to be a very terrible situation.

The Cossacks had many grievances against the Poles. Not only had the Government forbidden them to attack their constant and traditional enemy the Tartars unless Poland was at war with the Turks, but the Jesuits had tried to convert them to Catholicism, and the Polish nobles, who had gone in great numbers into the Ukraine during the sixteenth century and taken

up vast estates there, were making a determined effort, in which they were ably seconded by their Jewish stewards, to take away the freedom which was the basis of the corporate existence of the Cossacks, and force them into serfdom. The Polish Government also had not kept faith with the Cossacks. It had made promises and treaties only to break them, and when the Cossacks resented this treatment had no better remedy to apply than suppression. The fire was thus laid and the match was applied by Bogdan Chmielnicki, a small Polish noble whom the tyranny of the Governor of the Ukraine had driven into the Cossack ranks and whom the Cossacks had elected their Hetman.

John Casimir, brother and successor of Wladislaus IV, as soon as he was elected, realizing the justice of the Cossack cause, and seeing the necessity of putting an end to the horror of Cossack warfare, made a treaty with them recognizing Chmielnicki as their leader and confirming their privileges. But it was only a truce and of short duration. Its terms were not kept because neither nobles nor Jesuits wanted to keep them, and for six long years the war with the Cossacks went on. It was a war of indescribable barbarity. To Cossack fury was added the horrors of servile war, as the peasants and

serfs of the Ukraine joined the Cossacks in this war for freedom. Old men, women, and children, the noncombatants in the villages, were subjected to a thousand tortures before they were finally killed and their villages pillaged and burned to the ground. Whichever side was victorious ruin and massacre followed the victory. Finally, in 1654, despairing of any permanent arrangement with the Poles, Chmielnicki turned to Muscovy and made a treaty with the Czar by which the Cossacks transferred their allegiance to him in return for his promise to maintain all their privileges. This promise was not kept. Little by little the Czar took away the Cossacks' privileges and curtailed their freedom until only a few pitiful remnants were left of the organization that had been their pride and bulwark. That, however, belongs to the history of Russia, not Poland. For Poland the immediate result of their defection was the invasion of the country by Muscovites and Swedes; the ultimate result was the permanent loss of the great Dnieper Valley (the Ukraine) to Russia and of the Duchy of Prussia to Brandenburg.

Like a flashlight suddenly turned upon her, the defection of the Cossacks revealed to her enemies the internal divisions in Poland and her

resulting weakness, and Muscovite and Swede hastened to take advantage of it. The Muscovites pushed into Lithuania, took the fortresses of Polotsk and Smolensk, and ended by establishing themselves in the capital, Wilna. The rest of Lithuania, led by Janus Radziwill, submitted voluntarily to the Czar Alexis. Meanwhile the Swedes under their King, Charles X, whom John Casimir had never recognized as King of Sweden and against whose accession he had strongly protested, invaded Great Poland, while the Prince of Transylvania took Cracow and Podolia. Led by Radziovski, a Polish exile who returned to Poland with the Swedes, the many nobles of Great Poland who were disaffected toward John Casimir set up Charles X of Sweden as king, and John Casimir, deserted by all parties, was obliged to flee to Silesia. The state of Poland had ceased to exist!

That it speedily came to life again is due very largely to the faith and the patriotism of one man, Augustus Kordecki, Prior of the Monks of St. Paul, of the Convent of Jasna-Gora, which was situated inside the fortifications of Czenstochowa, where a miracle-working image of the Virgin of great age and sacredness was preserved. He resolutely refused to sur-

render his fortress, though his garrison within and his countrymen without all urged him to do so, and the little band began the apparently hopeless task of defending their bit of rock — “the only spot in all Poland that remained free” — against the Swedish army, trained and seasoned by the Thirty Years’ War, and the traitor nobility of their own land. But before they were obliged to surrender, the example of their courage and constancy had aroused the shame, the patriotism, and the religious enthusiasm of the Poles. Many Polish soldiers deserted the Swedish cause, the nobles held a “Confederation” and withdrew their allegiance from the Swedish King, John Casimir came back to Poland, and taking command of the troops relieved the little garrison of Czenstochowa. He then set up his headquarters in the Convent of St. Paul, held there the first meeting of the Senate, from there issued the proclamation announcing his return, and calling the people to return to their allegiance and arm themselves to drive out the foreign invaders. In responding to this call the Poles showed themselves for once a united people.

But Poland needed allies, and the King devoted his attention to finding them. An alliance with Denmark was of the greatest value be-



cause it took the brunt of the Swedish war off the Poles. The Emperor also as King of Hungary sent assistance to Poland, and Frederick William of Brandenburg, the "Great Elector," in 1657, by the Treaty of Wehlau, made an offensive and defensive alliance with Poland. But Poland was ruined by the price she had to pay for these alliances. Unable to meet her obligation to Austria, she was obliged to give Austria temporary possession of the salt mines of Wieliczka, one of the greatest sources of revenue of the Crown, while to satisfy Brandenburg she had to renounce her suzerainty over East Prussia.

In 1618, by the extinction of the line of Albert of Hohenzollern, the Hohenzollern Electors of Brandenburg had become Dukes in Prussia, and the vassals of Poland. Frederick William, the "Great Elector," who became Duke of Prussia in 1640, resolved to free himself from this vassalage and by the conquest of West Prussia from Poland and of Pomerania from the Swedes (who had conquered it in the Thirty Years' War) to unite his electoral with his ducal territories and become the dominating power on the Baltic. No ruler of his age, few of any age, surpassed him in his sinister ability to use the misfortunes of his neighbors in achiev-

ing his own ends. The Treaty of Wehlau was only the first of many successful arrangements by which this prince raised his electorate from an obscure little German State to a Power of European importance and paved the way for Empire.

The war begun by Poland's misfortunes had thus assumed European proportions and significance, and in 1659 bade fair to ruin the commerce of the Baltic. The Maritime Powers, England and Holland, then intervened and negotiated the peace finally signed at Oliva in May, 1660, by Sweden, Brandenburg, and Poland, by which John Casimir renounced all claims on the crown of Sweden and ceded Livonia (except one small portion) to Charles X. The war with Muscovy, begun in 1654, had been abandoned in 1656, and Russians and Poles united to fight against their common enemy, Sweden. War between them was resumed in 1660, however, and Poland inflicted upon Muscovy two serious defeats, which resulted in her withdrawal from White Russia and Lithuania and from nearly all the western Ukraine. The exhaustion of Muscovy, Lubomirski's rebellion in Great Poland, and the entrance of the Cossacks of the western Ukraine into an alliance with Turkey, which raised up

for Muscovy and Poland a common enemy far more terrible to both of them than either was to the other, led to the signing of the Peace of Andrusovo in 1667, by which Poland ceded to Russia all the territory east of the Dnieper, including Smolensk and Kiev, and the Cossacks of the Dnieper were put under the joint dominion of the Czar and the King of Poland, who agreed together to restrain the Cossacks from the Black Sea raids so provocative of Turkish hostility and to prevent their rebellion against either of their sovereigns. The Cossacks agreed to defend both Muscovite and Polish territory, and to protect the Ukraine from the Tartars. Thus ended the Thirteen Years' War, as the Russians know it, a war that exceeded even the Thirty Years' War in its terrible devastation, its brutality, and bestiality.

It was in the reign of John Casimir also that the last touch of anarchy was given to the Polish Constitution by the introduction of the use of the veto power by which a single deputy could bring about the dissolution of the Diet. Such a dissolution not only ended the session, but it rendered null and void the acts already passed. The Diet was considered as not having taken place. It is to a deputy named Sicinski from Upita that the doubtful honor of making

this innovation belongs. It was not at all liked at first by the other deputies, though they recognized that it was legally implied in their system of unanimity voting. Its advantages were soon recognized, however, and it was used very frequently in the years that followed. It became in fact a means of putting an end to all legislation and hence to all government. In the course of the next one hundred and twelve years no less than forty-eight Diets were broken up, or "exploded" as it was technically expressed — seven under John Casimir, four under Michael, seven under John Sobieski, and thirty under Augustus II and Augustus III. It meant that Poland was without the laws necessary to progress, that justice was not administered, and that the country was practically without an army since no taxes were voted to pay it.

A year after the Peace of Andrusovo, John Casimir abdicated, and left the country. His reign of twenty-one years had been a reign full of difficulties, dangers, and disasters, and the King had borne a leading part in all of them. But after the death of the Queen he lost interest in trying to rule a country which would not be ruled and whose internal dissensions (which had led to the open and serious rebel-

lion of Great Poland under Lubomirski, Grand Marshal and Vice-Hetman of the Crown) were, as he plainly saw, leading straight to ruin.

John Casimir had been a Jesuit and a cardinal before he became king, and after his abdication he returned to the religious life which he had abandoned for the kingship, and spent the rest of his life in France as Abbot of the Monastery of St. Germain des Près.

For a number of years before his abdication the King had tried to get the Diet to accept the French Prince of Condé, known as "The Great Condé," as his successor. As naming his successor was contrary to the King's *pacta conventa*, this attempt roused a storm of protest from both houses of the Diet, but many of the most influential magnates believed as he did that in the choice of an outsider like Condé, personally able and supported by a strong state like France, lay the best hope for the reform of the Polish Constitution, and the King abdicated largely in the hope that his abdication would be followed by the election of Condé. That many of the magnates had received French bribes and that this had undoubtedly had a good deal to do with forming their convictions, is unfortunately true. But the most carefully laid plans and the ablest diplomatic skill were of no avail in

the Diet of Election, where the majority of the *szlachta* still held the mediæval belief that the election of a king was a religious act and that the deputies simply proclaimed king him "whose name God put it into their hearts to proclaim." When, therefore, after violent and protracted discussions, the Castellan of Sandomir proposed the name of Michael Wisniowiecki (whose only qualifications were that he was a "Piaśt" and the son of the Polish general, Jeremiah Wisniowiecki, who had made his name a terror to the Cossacks), and said in explanation that he had simply followed the voice of God who had put in his heart the words "Long live King Michael," the matter was decided for the majority of the *szlachta*. Previous sessions had also convinced the supporters of Condé that he could not be elected, and finally they also went over to Michael, who was elected and crowned in 1669.

Opposition to Condé had indeed gone so far that in one session a nobleman had risen and cried, "If any one votes for the Prince of Condé I will shoot him," and to a Senator who rebuked him somewhat sharply he replied by simply firing his pistol at him! The session then resolved itself into a free fight during which the Bishops and Senators ran to cover and could

not be induced to resume deliberations for three days. From this it will be seen that not all the members agreed with the Castellan of Cracow, who said that "he rejoiced in the session which showed 'real Polish vigor' and that he wished every election could be decided amid the whistling of pistol shots."

The election of Michael was a signal for a war with the Turks. The Cossacks, believing that the son of their greatest oppressor (the father of King Michael) would be sure to resume their persecution, rushed to arms and offered their allegiance to the Turks in return for protection. The Grand Hetman, John Sobieski, defeated the Cossack leader Doroshenko, but was too busy conspiring with the French to dethrone King Michael, to follow up his victory, and the Turks were able easily to invade Podolia and capture Kamieniec, the key to the whole province and the only strong fortress on its frontier. With conspiracy that amounted to civil war going on in Warsaw and absorbing the whole attention of the Diet and the magnates, the King could do nothing in the south but make a peace by which he surrendered all of Podolia and the Ukraine and agreed to pay tribute to the Turks. The Diet, when it finally met, considered the peace too disgraceful to ratify and

blamed the King for making it, though it is difficult to see that they had left him any alternative. They raised a large army and sent it south under John Sobieski, who fought the Turks with skill and vigor for four long years and in the end was able to make only a compromise peace, Kamieniec and part of the Ukraine being left by it in the hands of the Turks.

In the midst of this war King Michael died, and the Poles elected John Sobieski in his place. There were other strong candidates, but Sobieski overcame all opposition to himself by appearing suddenly in the Diet with several thousands of his southern troops.

The new King, John III, though a really great general, was a man of very minor talents in other directions, and his personal character was far from lofty. His great personal ambition and his entire unscrupulousness had led him to spend the first forty years of his life in secret intrigues or open rebellion against his King. It was the events of these years that contributed in large measure to create a situation in Poland that frustrated his plans for reform after he himself became king. He was, also, very much influenced by the Queen in political matters, and the influence was entirely bad. During his reign Poland declined steadily, dis-



order increased, and government almost ceased to exist, while in both town and country economic ruin was advancing upon the unhappy country by leaps and bounds. The one really great event of John Sobieski's reign was his famous rescue of Vienna from the Turks, and even this achievement was of more value to Austria than to Poland.

Although the Turkish power had already entered the period of slow but sure decline that was to enable Austria and Russia during the next century to push her back beyond the Danube and the Black Sea, where she was no longer a menace to Christian Europe, yet in the late seventeenth century no one knew this, and the victories of Turkey under the latest of her great Grand Viziers, Kara Mustafa Kiuprili, were in any case a terrible danger to southeastern Europe. The Emperor, who as King of Hungary and overlord of Transylvania was the natural leader in this movement against the Turks, was engaged at this time in a great struggle with Louis XIV of France for the domination of western Europe and had no forces at liberty to use against the Turks. Hungary, moreover, entirely disaffected as the result of Jesuit persecutions and much-resented changes in her traditional system of government, joined

the Turks, as did also the Prince of Transylvania, and wherever the Emperor turned for allies he found that the diplomacy of France had arranged to thwart him. Everywhere except in Poland. Here the presence of the Turks at their very doors and the energy, decision, and tact of the King prevailed over French gold and even over the traditional suspicion and fear of Austria, and in 1683 Poland allied herself with the Emperor and agreed to put forty thousand men in the field against the Turk. But as usual it took time to get either money or soldiers in Poland, and it was six months before Sobieski could start south. Meanwhile the Turkish forces had overrun Hungary and advanced up the Danube to the very walls of Vienna, outside which their vast armies lay encamped for miles around. Turkish engineers had already undermined the walls, and the capture of the hungry and disease-stricken city was only a question of a very short time when the Poles arrived. Shouting "Sobieski forever," they threw themselves upon the Turks and the terror of Sobieski's name, as well as his skill and the fighting qualities of his troops, won the day. All Europe rejoiced that Vienna was saved and Christendom preserved from the invasion of the infidel. Venice and the Em-

peror joined in following up this victory, and soon Hungary was cleared of the Turks and their retreat from the border countries was under way. The Treaty of Carlowitz which closed the war was not made till 1699, but by it Poland recovered Podolia and Kamieniec which an earlier treaty had left in Turkish hands.

But even the prestige of this victory did not enable the King to control the quarrels of his subjects, and he died in 1696, broken-hearted over the coming ruin of his country which on his death-bed he plainly saw and foretold.

So low had Poland sunk by this time that the election of her new king was a matter about which she herself had little to say. Among eighteen candidates the only two who had any chance of election were foreigners, Frederick Augustus, Elector of Saxony, and the French candidate, the Prince of Conti. France bribed very liberally, but the threat of Peter the Great now Czar of Muscovy, that he would declare war on Poland if Conti was elected, was even more effective than French gold, and the arrival of Augustus with his pockets full of money, after all the others had spent theirs, completed the argument in his favor and he was elected and crowned king as Augustus II, in September, 1697. A large party in the Diet, however, had

## 156 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

proclaimed Stanislaus Leszczyński king, and the first act of Augustus was to drive him out and to win over his chief adherents, by bribes, to the Saxon side.

The chief event in the reign of Augustus II was the participation of Poland in the Great Northern War. When Charles XI of Sweden died in 1697, leaving a minor son as his heir, all the enemies of Sweden, — Denmark, Russia, Brandenburg, and Poland, — thinking her moment of weakness had arrived, joined in a league to despoil her of the territories they all coveted. Never was a band of robbers more entirely mistaken in their estimate of a character and a situation. Though young, the new King, Charles XII, was a born soldier and a general of genius; and his army though small was well trained and of fine material. Striking first at one enemy, then at another, jumping with amazing speed from one part of the country to another, he was everywhere successful, and in 1706–1707 his camp was the center of European diplomacy where both sides in the great war then waging in western Europe, the War of the Spanish Succession, competed for his alliance.

Though it was the King as Elector of Saxony who had made this war, it was his Polish king-

dom that suffered from it. After Charles had defeated Augustus he deposed him from the Polish throne and put in his place that same Stanislaus Leszczyński whom Augustus had driven out a few years before. But the reorganization of Russia, under Peter the Great, led to the defeat of Charles at Poltava in 1709, the withdrawal of the Swedes from Poland, and the flight of the King whom they had made.

But whether her king was Pole or Saxon, whether she was victorious or defeated, made little real difference to Poland during these years. Friend and foe alike treated her as if she had no political existence — which was indeed very near to the truth. Swedes, Saxons, and Russians marched back and forth across the country, plundering and destroying wherever they went, and the Polish magnates took sides in the conflict quite as it pleased them personally, supporting Augustus, Stanislaus, or Charles XII, with equal ease and without any apparent sense of the national interests. When the war ended in 1720, the ruin that John Sobieski had foretold for Poland had already overtaken her.

But though ruined Poland was still of importance in the field of European diplomacy. Austria, Russia, and France all regarded her with

interest and wove about her a tangled web of diplomatic intrigue, in which she was caught and held like a helpless fly in the web of a spider.

With the accession of Michael Romanoff to the czardom a new era dawned in the history of Muscovy, and in the succeeding one hundred and twenty years she developed into one of the great Powers of Europe. Under Michael and his successor Alexis, order and some measure of prosperity were restored to Russia, and the way was prepared for the son and successor of Alexis, Peter the Great, who undertook the great task of bringing Russia once more into contact with western Europe from which she had been cut off for four hundred years by her long subjection to Tartar rule, and its consequences. To restore her contact with western Europe it was necessary to reach the Baltic where the King of Sweden was at this time supreme (he ruled Western Pomerania and all the East Baltic Coast north of Courland besides Sweden proper), and from which Muscovy was completely shut off. The best efforts of the early years of the reign of Peter the Great were spent in preparing the country for this task, and the Great Northern War which brought about the ruin of Poland gave Peter his opportunity and was the beginning of Muscovy's greatness.

Peter used his opportunity to the full. For twenty years he fought, sustained defeat, reorganized his army and his government, and fought again, and when the peace was finally signed at Nystädt, in 1721, it left Peter in proud possession of Carelia, Ingria, Esthonia, and Livonia. Her "little window to the West" was wide open, and Muscovy was looking out ready to take part in the commerce and the life of the Western world.

It was after the Peace of Nystädt that Peter took the title of "Emperor of all Russia," a title which a number of his predecessors had desired, but had not been strong enough to assume in the face of opposition from Poland who was also a ruler of Russian lands. But Polish opposition was now of no importance. On the contrary, one of the most significant results of the Northern War was that it left Russian influence already well established in Poland. It was Peter the Great who restored Augustus II to the Polish throne in 1709, and it was Peter's ambassador who obliged Augustus to accept the arrangements of Nystädt which left Poland with no compensation at all for the losses and the sacrifices of nearly twenty years of warfare. Peter planned quite consciously to bring Poland under Russian rule, and Catharine II in

this, as in most of her other policies, but carried out his far-reaching and far-seeing plans.

In western Europe also the Treaties of Westphalia which closed the Thirty Years' War had opened a new political era. The great questions which agitated Europe after 1648 were no longer the religious questions that for one hundred and fifty years had determined her policies and dictated her alliances, but questions of territorial aggrandizement. On the ruins of feudalism, to which as a system of government the wars of religion had given the final, irretrievable blow, the bases of the modern European state system were being laid down. Territorially great and strongly centralized monarchies were being created by conquest and maintained by force, and questions of defensible boundaries became of paramount importance. Of the two greatest of these boundary questions, the rivalry of France and Austria for the Rhine, and of Austria and Russia for the Danube, that of the Rhine was already in existence before 1648, and France's interest in the election of the kings of Poland all during the seventeenth century was the result of her policy, already well defined, of keeping a barrier of states friendly to France in the Emperor's rear ready to strike him in the back if he attacked France on the



Rhine. Turkey, Poland, and Sweden formed such a barrier for several generations, and France's alliance with Russia in the nineteenth century — the Dual Alliance — is but the latest form of this same idea.

Under Louis XIV Polish friendship was carefully cultivated, Polish kings married French princesses (the queens of Wladislaus IV, John Casimir, and John Sobieski were all French), and the French party at the court of Warsaw was able and influential. But under the Regency and Louis XV this policy, like most others of the "Great Monarch," was less effectively carried out and France sustained some serious diplomatic defeats. But the policy was kept up, and on the death of Augustus II, in 1733, France made a vigorous effort to revive her waning prestige in Poland by bringing about the election of a king who would represent and serve her interests. The candidate whom she chose to support on this occasion was the ex-King Stanislaus Leszczynski, who was also the father-in-law of the King of France, his daughter Marie having married Louis XV in 1725. Stanislaus was also supported by the best element among the Polish magnates and as a "Piast" was favored by the majority of the population.

Encouraged by the statement of the French Government that France intended to defend against every enemy the liberties of Poland, "a power to whom France was bound by all the ties of honor and friendship," and backed up by the power of French gold which flowed very freely through the fingers of the French Ambassador, Monti, the Polish Primate and Interrex, Theodore Potocki, and his party rallied the country to the support of Stanislaus, and in September, 1733, he was elected King of Poland.

But his election was only the beginning of his difficulties. The opposition of Austria to any candidate supported by France was inevitable, as was also that of Russia to the friend of Sweden and her age-long enemy Turkey, and these two Powers issued a joint protest against the candidature of Stanislaus Leszczyński. They had no candidate in mind to propose in his place, but they speedily adopted the Elector of Saxony, the son of Augustus II, and undertook to put him on the Polish throne. It could be done only by force of arms, so twenty thousand Russians and ten thousand Cossacks were sent into Poland. King Stanislaus having no army was obliged to take refuge in Danzig and there await French assistance. Without diffi-

culty, therefore, the Russians entered Warsaw in October, got together a handful of Senators and Nuncios and obliged them to proclaim the Elector of Saxony King of Poland. But Danzig still held out, and it was eight months before the Russians could force it to surrender, though the help sent by France was wholly inadequate and surrender was a foregone conclusion.

The reign of Augustus III, which lasted for thirty years (1733-1763), was a period of almost complete stagnation. Poland simply continued to exist, but without new laws because all the Diets were "exploded"; without foreign ambassadors because the *szlachta* did not want to pay them; without even that minimum of executive activity which Poland had had heretofore, because the King, who was indolent by disposition and very indifferent to the interests of his Polish kingdom, lived in Saxony, visited Poland infrequently, and left the government entirely in the hands of his Chief Minister, Count Brühl. Brühl tried at first to introduce some order and authority into Poland's anarchy, but found himself balked at every turn by the determined opposition of the Poles themselves and the less obvious but no less persistent opposition of both Austria and Russia.

There were now as always in Poland a few people who realized the evils and dangers of her Constitution and of the public opinion which supported it. These men did their best to change the situation, both by introducing an entirely new system of education which they hoped would lead to sounder political theories and ideals, as well as by attempting, once more, to bring about an immediate constitutional reform. In these endeavors the great educational reformer Stanislaus Konarsky worked hand in hand with the Czartoryski, a Lithuanian magnate family of enormous wealth and great political importance. They were related to the Jagiellos and were distinguished above all other Poles of the period for their civic virtues and their intelligent interest in public affairs. Their family connections and official position, combined with their great wealth and public spirit, gave them such preëminence that they were generally referred to simply as "The Family" by their contemporaries.

Prince Michael Czartoryski, Chancellor of Lithuania and the head of the family, and his brother, Prince Augustus, Palatine of Red Russia, were the leaders of a small political group that desired to overthrow the republic and make Poland an absolute monarchy as the only

means of saving her. They were the intimate and trusted friends of Count Brühl, and during the first twenty years of the reign of Augustus III Brühl left Polish affairs very largely in their hands. When, however, all their plans of reform failed because their opponents "exploded" every Diet and annulled every "Confederation" by a "Counter-Confederation," and thus prevented them from ever getting their proposals before the country, they urged Brühl to provide the force for a *coup d'état*. When he refused, fearing to lose Poland entirely, the Czartoryski turned against both him and the King and tried to get the aid of Russia to dethrone Augustus and put in his place a king of their own choosing, a native Pole pledged to carry out their ideas.

Nothing could have shown more clearly than this proposal their utter ignorance of the motives and forces at work in the politics of Europe or the hopelessness of Poland's case in their hands. The years of Poland's stagnation had been years of struggle and momentous achievement among her neighbors. In Russia the successors of Peter the Great had consolidated his conquests and maintained and strengthened the position he had won for Russia in Europe, and the country was almost ready to take

another long stride along the path marked out for her by Peter. This path led directly over a conquered and dependent Poland, and nothing was further from the mind of the Russian Empress than the strengthening of Poland's kingship. In Brandenburg-Prussia also, Frederick the Great had succeeded to the throne in 1740 and was already embarked on the career of conquest that was to make his little state a European Power. He too had designs on Poland and was already astutely hinting to Russia that they might combine.

In 1763 Augustus III died, and in that very year the close of the Seven Years' War left Prussia and Russia free to turn their attention to Poland.

## CHAPTER IV

### POLISH SOCIETY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

DURING the Jagiellon period Poland had developed into a great Power and had made a constitution which the next hundred years put to the test of experience. The Constitution was unable to meet the test. Power was wholly in the hands of the nobility, who, narrow and ignorant, did not see the necessity of strong government, and neither allowed the king to exercise any compulsion on their order nor exercised it themselves. This period of the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century was exactly the period when states about Poland were building up strong governments. They were making, out of just such loosely organized elements and very much such turbulent and lawless nobilities, organized and disciplined entities that developed into modern states, and Poland's development in the opposite direction put her at a disadvantage from which she never recovered. Perhaps, as many writers claim, it was not necessary for Poland to develop a despotic kingship; a strong, en-

lightened oligarchy might have given her good government, but her best chance of success lay probably in a strong king. She was in much the position of England under the Lancastrian kings, when Parliament had powers that it was not sufficiently disciplined or developed or experienced to use. The English Parliament lent those powers to the Tudors and submitted to discipline. The Poles would not resign the use of their powers and destruction followed. In England it was popular confidence in the monarchy that made the Tudor despotism possible. In Poland hereditary right might possibly have given a really able king the opportunity to win the confidence of the most suspicious of peoples and induce them to submit to a government that would have preserved order at home and have kept Poland respected and wholesomely feared by her neighbors. But any such chance — and it was a slim one — was lost when the Jagiellon dynasty came to an end with Sigismund II and the theory of the elective kingship became a disastrous reality.

The fact that they were the “makers of kings” and could unmake them at will enhanced enormously the self-esteem and self-confidence of the *szlachta*, already dangerously great. There is no evidence that any, even the



faintest, suspicion of their own competence or the fallibility of their judgment ever assailed the Polish nobility. Many of Poland's kings saw her desperate needs and tried to meet them, but the *szlachta*, blind to the interests of the country as a whole, regarded every attempt at effective government as an attack on their own privileges, their "liberty," and opposed it. But though strenuous in opposition, the *szlachta* took no initiative themselves for the promotion of the public welfare. They seemed to feel, indeed, that if they prevented any infringement of the liberty of the individual noble, the general welfare would look out for itself. As they *would* not govern and the king *could* not, the quite natural and inevitable result was that Poland had no government, and anarchy and its resulting weakness led her straight to her fall.

The responsibility for Poland's fall thus rests with her nobility. They formed only about eight per cent of the population — not more than a million out of a total of between twelve and thirteen million souls — and comprised people of a very different sort from the nobilities of other European countries. In Poland any one was noble who possessed a freehold estate or could prove descent from ancestors

who possessed one, who was not engaged in either trade or commerce, and who was legally free to live where he chose. All nobles were equal by birth, and titles or honors gave no right of precedence or other advantage. Each noble was a lawmaker, an elector of kings, and eligible himself to election to the kingship. But though theoretically powerful, the *szlachta* as a whole were really very weak. The development of the liberty of the individual had been pushed so far that by the eighteenth century it had defeated its own ends. The Diets met only to be "exploded," and the *szlachta* were quite as powerless to make new laws as the kings were to carry out the old ones. Society had returned to that primitive state where the power of the individual was the only decisive force.

As a matter of fact a few great magnate families were so strong that they practically ruled the country. There were perhaps eight or ten such families in Poland and as many more in Lithuania, and their names, such as Czar-toryski, Potocki, Radziwill, Lubomirski, occur on nearly every page of seventeenth and eighteenth century Polish history. Land was the only source of wealth open to their class, and the estates which they owned and ruled were of enormous size — far larger than many

of the contemporary German and Italian states — and their wealth of almost fabulous proportions. They also held, among them, all the great offices of state in the gift of the king.

These “dynasts” conducted themselves like the sovereigns they really were. Their “courts,” as they called their establishments, were modeled on the official court, and in many cases far surpassed that of the king in both size and splendor. Like the king, they had their treasurers, chamberlains, major-domos, equeries, and other state officials, while their wives had their ladies-in-waiting, ladies of the bed-chamber, pages, and so on, quite like queens. Attached to each court was what was called the “house militia,” which was really a standing army. As it was the privilege of each Polish gentleman to keep as many armed men in attendance upon him as he desired and could pay for, these private armies often numbered five to ten thousand men — and this at the very time when the most serious wounds were inflicted upon the country by Swedes, Muscovites, and Tartars because the king could not get an army of sufficient size to guard the frontier and could not pay it when he got it! Horse and foot guards kept sentry day and night at the gates of these “courts,” and the “dynasts”

kept up direct correspondence with foreign monarchs and began their communications, "We ——— by the Grace of God," quite in the kingly fashion. About the only attribute of royalty which they did not possess was the privilege of coining money, which was reserved to the king.

Extravagance and a somewhat barbaric love of display, which characterized their class, gave their courts a sumptuousness and a picturesque quality that was quite strange to western Europe. The Polish national dress, which in the eighteenth century was still very generally worn, and consisted of a robe of cloth with hanging sleeves belted in with a sash and worn over a vest of silk, high boots meeting the robe at the knee, and a cap bordered with fur, made the Polish gentleman far more Oriental than Western in appearance. Besides the house militia the courts of the magnates were full of retainers of a more plebeian sort, — peasants, Cossacks, Tartars, and others, who acted as messengers and lackeys at home and swelled the number of the magnate's following when he went abroad. They wore gorgeous and barbaric liveries which gave a marked Oriental character to the appearance of the court.

Although a few of the magnates had received

everything that western Europe had to offer in the way of education, and were as widely informed, as highly cultivated, and as cosmopolitan people as there were in Europe, the majority of upper-class Poles, the old-fashioned country magnates, had little education themselves and provided little for their children. Most of them could write, but so illegibly that when an old-fashioned gentleman wrote a letter it was customary to send a copy made by his secretary along with the original in the interests of clarity. Hunting big game which abounded in their forests, riding and looking after their estates, where they acted as judges and meted out what went by the name of justice to their peasants, were their chief occupations when at home. Many of them, however, spent most of their time playing the game of politics which kept them away from home a great part of the time, and their stewards, who were mostly Jews, managed their estates.

But the majority of the nobility were not magnates. Many of them formed what in other countries would be called the well-to-do middle class. They owned enough land to support themselves and their families in comfort if they stayed quietly at home, looked after their estates themselves, and left the expensive and

absorbing game of politics to their richer brethren. They were ignorant, prejudiced, and very conservative, but in spite of these faults were probably the best of Poland's citizens.

Another and perhaps the largest section of the *szlachta* were by no means well-to-do. Unable to go into trade without losing their rank; unable to serve in the national army because, practically, there no longer was one; possessing very little land, too little to give them a decent living; or, more often, having lost the little that had made their families noble, these nobles were quite as poor as the peasants upon whom they looked down as from a great height. They were very humbly grateful for the opportunity to attach themselves to the courts and enter the service of their magnate relatives or neighbors, which offered them, indeed, almost their only means of livelihood. It was this class that supplied the magnates with their house militia and most of their other retainers. They were fed, housed, and clothed by the magnate, and in return fought his battles with his neighbors and accompanied him to the meetings of the local Dietine, where their votes as well as their arms were completely at his service and preserved for him that complete ascendancy over the whole countryside that the "liberty" of a

Polish magnate required. The children of many of them, who were kinsmen of the magnate, were adopted by him, brought up with his own children, and given the same advantages; the sons were provided with some lucrative public post which made them independent and the daughters were well married. But there was also another side to this service. In many houses no rooms or even beds were provided for the majority of the retainers, who slept in the kitchens, on stairways, or in the stables — wherever they could find a board to lie on. They did also hard and menial work and were beaten or otherwise punished in quite the same ways as were the servants of the peasant class. But in spite of all this the rank of the *szlachcic* was always recognized; whatever his occupation he could always wear a sword, which entitled him to the deference paid by all the peasants to a gentleman, and when he was beaten it was his privilege always to have a carpet under him!

The worst vices of the nobility, rich and poor alike, were gluttony and drunkenness. Perhaps their chief virtue was hospitality, but their love of display often made their hospitality a heavy tax upon their resources, and their habits of eating and drinking to excess meant that their entertainments often degenerated into mere

orgies where vast sums were wasted, which all too often were urgently needed to improve the conditions of the peasantry.

All contemporary observers seem to agree that in the eighteenth century Polish peasant conditions were the worst in all Europe. By a series of laws, passed chiefly during the sixteenth century, the free Polish peasants or *kmetens* lost all their freedom and became practically the chattels of the nobility. Forbidden to own land or to move from one estate to another, they became serfs on the lands of the Crown, the Church, and the lay nobility, and were without legal rights. The lord of the land held the only courts of justice to which they had access, and from his decisions there was no appeal. He even determined the religion of his peasants, and if he killed one of them his only punishment was the payment of a fine. King Stanislaus Leszczynski said that Poland was the only country where the common people were deprived of even the rights of humanity.

Nor did physical well-being at all mitigate the misery of their legal position. On the contrary, there were no more wretched beings in the world than the Polish peasants. Their houses were merely shelters without beds, chairs, tables, or any other of the most neces-



sary furniture. They slept on straw, often on the same straw as their cattle, and were regarded as little more than beasts by their masters who treated them with a cruelty that is almost incredible. Living in filth without proper clothes, food, or care, only about half of the children lived to grow up, and those who did had, indeed, small incentive to do so. Forced labor on the lord's land, fixed quite arbitrarily by the lord on Sundays as well as week days if it suited his pleasure or convenience, often reduced the time at the disposal of the peasant for the cultivation of his own little plot to a minimum too small to yield him a living; but in spite of that he was obliged to pay a part of that small harvest to the lord, and in the forest regions half of all he trapped or shot likewise belonged to the lord. Living (if indeed existence under such circumstances can be called living!) on the edge of starvation in normal times, in a bad harvest year the peasants died like flies. It is small wonder that they felt that any change in their condition must be for the better, and that they made from time to time the most savage insurrections against the lords, of which that led by the Cossack Bogdan Chmielnicki is a notable and terrible example. When one remembers that the peasantry formed

over seventy per cent of the population, that here as elsewhere their welfare was a necessary condition of the welfare of the whole country, and that they were a laborious and naturally intelligent people with a history of happy and prosperous years behind them, it is indeed a heavy load of responsibility that rests upon the *szlachta* who quite arbitrarily reduced them, and with them their common country, to such utter misery.

Only less sad than the condition of the peasants and quite as significant is the condition of Poland's towns. In the early fifteenth century the towns were numerous, large, and prosperous; they were represented in the Diet and were of political as well as economic importance. The Turkish conquest of Constantinople, which cut off the Black Sea trade, struck them their first heavy blow, and the *szlachta* followed up this economic crisis by legislation against their political position and by artificial trade restrictions which made their recovery of lost ground difficult if not impossible. The devastation of the country by Swedes, Turks, and Muscovites during the seventeenth century swept away all their attempts at rehabilitation and left them economically ruined even when they escaped physical destruction. In the eighteenth century

grass was growing in the streets of Lemberg, while Cracow had sunk to the proportions of a small provincial town of sixteen thousand inhabitants. Even Warsaw, where the court of the king stimulated a certain amount of business, was but a ghost of its former prosperous self. In these and all the towns the little business that remained was in the hands of the Jews. The prosperous Polish and Polonized-German burghers of earlier days had sunk to the social and economic level of the peasants and were scarcely distinguishable from them.

All the travelers speak of the great natural riches of the country, its forests, mines, and fertile fields with their vast possibilities of prosperity, and equally of its entire economic stagnation. There were very few manufactures and almost no commerce, while a large laboring population starved in the midst of riches they did not use. Some observers seemed to think that even under the bad conditions of the eighteenth century far more prosperity was possible than was enjoyed, and it is probably true. The slavery of the peasant had killed all his ambition and interest in his work, and centuries of misfortune, oppression, and injustice, as well as the vicious influence of a class system which made work degrading, had blunted the

initiative of the Polish burgher and had blinded him even to the possibilities that were open to him. With a grain country second to none in Europe, with only a section of it under cultivation, and only the very inadequate local market for what was raised, the Poles never took the pains even to investigate the rich possibilities of opening up once more their old Black Sea trade by sending their grain down the Dniester through Turkish Moldavia. The same thing was true in regard to trade with Silesia by way of the river Notez, a tributary of the Oder, which an entirely unfounded report declared was not navigable. Frederick the Great found out that it was navigable even before he invaded Silesia, and as soon as the region came under his control the Notez became the channel for a large and very lucrative trade.

No account of the Polish towns would be complete without some mention of the Jews. Though they formed only a small part of the population, they were an element to whose importance in the life of the eighteenth century all travelers bear witness. The English traveler Coxe says that, in Lithuania "if you ask for an interpreter, they bring you a Jew; if you come to an inn, the landlord is a Jew; if you want post-horses, a Jew procures them and a Jew

drives them; if you wish to purchase, a Jew is your agent: this perhaps is the only country in Europe where Jews cultivate the ground; and we frequently saw them engaged in sowing, reaping, mowing, and other works of husbandry." They also acted as stewards for the nobility, and the management of nearly all the noble estates in the country was in their hands. They were practically the only tradesmen and artisans and general business class that the country had. They picked up and carried on the tasks that the Poles let drop because they were too hard or too unremunerative or too degrading to continue, and it is difficult to see how the country could have got on without them.

But if they were useful to Poland, Poland was a haven of refuge to them. Though they were disliked and persecuted by the Polish nobility, the Jews yet found in Poland during the Middle Ages a measure of protection and toleration that was denied them everywhere else in Europe.

Boleslaus the Pious in 1264 issued a charter of liberties to the Jews in Great Poland which was confirmed by Casimir the Great a few years later and extended to the whole kingdom. This formed the foundation of the legal position of the Jews for nearly five hundred years and was

confirmed by all the kings of Poland. It granted the Jew express trading privileges, protected him against persecution, and allowed him to organize his own life under his own law just as the Germans were allowed to organize under the Teutonic or Magdeburg Law. The charter expressly permitted the Jews to receive all kinds of pledges, including mortgages on the estates of the nobility, and gave them entire freedom of transit, of trade, and of financial operations. They were exempted from the jurisdiction of both municipal and ecclesiastical courts and were placed under the jurisdiction of a personal representative of the king, who was known, though a Christian, as the "Jewish judge." He was not permitted to convict a Jew on exclusively Christian testimony, and was obliged to punish an injury done to a Jew just as severely as though it had been done to a *szlachcic*. His verdicts also had to be approved by the Jewish Elders, who could themselves try certain minor cases. Particular emphasis was laid in the charter on guarding the Jew against the charges of ritual murder and violation of the Host.

Although these provisions show that the kings who issued them wished, as the charter quaintly states, that "they may realize during our happy reign that they have found comfort

with us," they also imply that the kings were practically alone in that desire. It is sadly true that Church, *szlachta*, and burghers were all opposed to the Jews and fought them persistently.

Prior to the time of Sigismund II, who, at the request of the Jews themselves, forbade the settlement of any more Jews in Poland, the Polish kings had encouraged Jewish immigration chiefly for two reasons. The Jews were able and willing to lend money to the kings who were always poor, and also the kings hoped, by building up a strong trading class in the towns, to counteract the growing influence of the *szlachta*. Furthermore, the Jews were willing to pay well, not only for the trading privileges granted them, but also for the mere privilege of living in Poland, and the Jewish poll-tax formed one of the most important items in the king's revenue. As the chief capitalists of the country, also, and its only financiers, they rendered invaluable services as the financial agents of the king and the court. They also opened up the mines and quarries of the country, cut its timber, and in general began the development of its rich and almost untouched resources.

During the Jagiellon period the kings were usually strong enough to protect the Jews from

the worst forms of persecution, but not always. Toward the end of the reign of Sigismund II, three Jews were burned at the stake, and during the succeeding century Jesuits, burghers, and *szlachta* united to rob them of most of their privileges and to reduce them to a condition as miserable and as uncertain as that of their race anywhere in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

Worst of all was the fact that this bitter struggle and its resultant misery was only one instance of the disunion and the antagonisms of race, class, and religion which were tearing Poland to pieces. With only fifty per cent of her population Polish and the rest a medley of Russians, Lithuanians, Jews, Germans, and Tartars, the problem of amalgamation was necessarily a difficult one and religious differences added enormously to race antagonism. It was a fateful moment when the Poles, who during the period when religious wars were practically universal had set an example of unity and tolerance to all Europe, began themselves in the late seventeenth century a period of religious persecution. First the Protestants and then the Orthodox were subjected to the steady

<sup>1</sup> The Ecclesiastical Synod of 1542 adopted the following resolution: "Whereas the Church tolerates the Jews for the sole purpose of reminding us of the torments of the Saviour, their numbers must not increase under any circumstances."



pressure of Jesuit intolerance, which reached a climax in the Acts of 1717, 1733, and 1736 by which the Dissidents were deprived of all political and civil rights. These acts threw the whole country into a ferment and drove the Orthodox populations, especially those of the southeast, to the very edge of rebellion.

In the long struggle of class against class, religion against religion, race against race, of which Poland was the theater during the closing century of her existence as a state, the last vestige of national unity disappeared. The time had come, that more than a hundred years before the Jesuit Skarga had foretold, when the enemy of the Poles would come in and destroy them seeing that, "since their hearts were no longer in accord, they were already lost."

Skarga, who was the friend and confessor of Sigismund III, and perhaps the greatest of the Polish Jesuits, had seen with wonderful clearness where internal disunion and weakness were leading his country and with a truly prophetic vision had foretold her fall.

"Close on the footsteps of your dissensions," he said, "will come the despotism of a foreigner who will destroy all your liberties: those liberties of which you are so proud will become merely a tale to tell your children and a mockery for all the world. Your children and their families will die in misery in the

hands of an enemy who hates them. . . . You will see your language destroyed, and your race, degenerate and scattered, condemned to . . . adopt the manners and customs of a people who hate you and whom you despise. You will have neither king nor the right to choose one, neither kingdom nor fatherland. Exiled, poor, miserable, and without a country, you will be spurned by those very kingdoms who now seek your alliance."

## CHAPTER V

### THE LAST KING OF POLAND· THE ERA OF PARTITION, 1763-1795

#### I. THE FIRST PARTITION

POLAND'S impotence during the period of her decline had made her the tool of foreign Powers, a pawn in the game of European diplomacy, the victim of the ambitions of first one and then another of the rival Powers.

The part that she had been able to play in the War of the Polish Succession and in the Seven Years' War had made Russia the Power of predominant influence in Poland in 1764, and the Empress Catharine II, who had come to the throne in July, 1762, was a ruler who knew how to make the most of that position. Of great ability and boundless ambition it was Catharine's dream, by the conquest of Poland, Sweden, and Turkey, to make the Baltic and the Black Sea Russian lakes and to rule at Constantinople, and the Seven Years' War had, she thought, put the possibility of realizing it in her hand. That war had established the claims of Russia and her neighbor, Prussia, to rank as great Powers in Europe, the equals of the older states, France,

Austria, and Spain. The last years of the war also had seen the close alliance of these new Powers as a result of the accession to the Russian throne of Peter III, a great personal admirer of Frederick the Great of Prussia. This alliance, dictated by the personal whim of a semi-idiotic despot rather than by the real interests of the country, was retained in modified form by Catharine when, six months after his accession, she usurped her husband's throne. She saw in the Prussian alliance the necessary condition of the success of her plans. She could not hope to carry them out unless Frederick the Great was willing to coöperate. Frederick on his part was very favorable to an alliance, though he by no means sympathized with all of Catharine's projects. He saw in friendship with Russia the best guaranty of the peace which was essential to his exhausted country, and he was not at all averse to the conquest of Sweden and Poland, always provided it was made of advantage to him — and he trusted himself to see that it was! Most important of all, perhaps, at this moment he feared the youthful might of Russia, and thought it far safer to be friend than foe to so dangerous a neighbor.

Accordingly when in October, 1763, the death of Augustus III of Saxony and Poland made

immediate action in Poland necessary, Russia and Prussia had already come to an understanding and were ready to sign a treaty (March, 1764) by which they agreed (1) to place Prince Stanislaus Poniatowski on the throne of Poland and keep him there by armed assistance if necessary; (2) to maintain the existing Constitution in Poland; and (3) to oblige the Polish Diet to grant complete political equality to the Polish Dissidents.

Maintaining the Polish Constitution meant, in plain language, preventing the abolition of the vicious *liberum veto* and the elective kingship. It meant that Poland was not to be allowed to reform her government, which alone could restore her strength and secure her independence. It was thus the first step toward her destruction as an independent state.

The question of political equality for the Dissidents was a matter of a very different sort, but quite as significant. The Dissidents were dissenters or non-conformists — people who would not accept the state religion, which in Poland was, as has already been said, Roman Catholic. The majority of the Dissidents, and the only ones in whom Catharine was interested, were Greek-Orthodox, or members of the Russian Church. In taking up their cause

Catharine hoped to do two things: first, to make herself popular in Russia and make the Russians forget that she was a foreigner and a usurper by making herself the champion of the cause dearest to all Russian hearts, the cause of the Orthodox religion; and second, she hoped to build up in Poland out of these enfranchised Dissidents a Russian party devoted to her interests. Nothing could have shown, more plainly than these arrangements, that Catharine's plan was to make Poland hers in fact if not in name, and to govern the country in the interests of Russia. The choice of the king also was made with this end especially in view. Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski was a young Polish noble, connected through his mother with the great Czartoryski family. His father was Count Stanislaus Poniatowski, Castellan of Cracow, friend and companion in arms of the Swedish hero, Charles XII.

An excellent education on cosmopolitan lines, by tutors at home and study abroad, especially in France, had developed the natural parts of the young prince, and had made him a keenly intelligent, highly cultivated, and charming gentleman. Unfortunately, neither nature nor education had given him the decision of character, tenacity of purpose, and high courage

that his country sorely needed in her king. At the age of twenty-two he was made, through his father's influence, *Stolnik*, or High Steward of Lithuania, and the next year he was sent to Russia as secretary to the English Ambassador, Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, to gain diplomatic experience, and especially an acquaintance with the Court of St. Petersburg, which would enable him to be of help in carrying out the plans of his maternal uncles, Prince Augustus and Prince Michael Czartoryski, the well-known Prince Palatine and Prince Chancellor.

Arrived at St. Petersburg, he almost at once won the affections and became the lover of the Grand Duchess Catharine, wife of the heir to the throne, and later the Empress Catharine II. The relationship lasted for three years, and was ended, if we may believe Catharine's own account, by him and not by her, and caused her great, if not very lasting, sorrow. It was due to her influence that at the end of 1756 he was made Polish Ambassador at the Court of St. Petersburg, and during the two following years he was one of the chief conspirators in the intrigues which aimed at placing the Grand Duchess instead of her husband on the throne at the death of the Empress Elizabeth. The conspirators went a little too far and showed

their plans too openly in 1758, when the Empress was ill — it was thought fatally. When she recovered, Poniatowski was told to leave Russia in thirty-six hours, and the Grand Duchess was in disgrace and strictly excluded from any further opportunity to play the game of politics.

But the wheel of fortune turned quickly for her. In four short years she was on the Russian throne, and in a position to play a part big enough to satisfy even her vaulting ambition. During these years her infatuation for Prince Stanislaus had gone, but an intimate knowledge of his character and capacities remained. Catharine believed she had in him a tool with which she could govern Poland in her own interests.

Meanwhile the Polish Reform Party, wholly ignorant of the Russo-Prussian treaty, whose terms were secret, were preparing to use the opportunity presented by the election of a new king, to introduce a new constitution. Their plan was briefly to strengthen the powers of the king at the expense of the Diet, to make the kingship hereditary, and to abolish the thoroughly vicious and anarchic *liberum veto*. The two brothers, Prince Michael and Prince Augustus Czartoryski, were, as has been said, the



leaders of this party, and had worked for twenty years preparing for this opportunity, organizing their little group into a party of reform, educating public opinion to support reforms, and training a new order of statesmen capable of managing a new government when they should get it.

Upon the death of Augustus III this party at once submitted its Constitution to the Diet, but before any action could be taken the Diet was "exploded." Other attempts met with a similar fate. The reformers then succeeded in forming a "Confederation," but their opponents held "Counter-Confederations" which nullified all their actions, and they realized that it would be impossible either to reform the Constitution or elect a king without the aid of a foreign Power. Thereupon the Prince Chancellor in February, 1764, played right into Catharine's hand by begging her support in the approaching election in the interests of order and good government. This gave Catharine the very opportunity she wanted to send a Russian army into Poland, and made her mistress of the situation.

Although the Reform Party had chosen Prince Adam Czartoryski, son of the Prince Palatine, as their candidate for the kingship,

they very readily transferred their support to Prince Stanislaus Poniatowski when they found that the Empress would support no one else. Their influence, combined with that of the Russian Ambassador, who had used Russian troops to imprison or to drive out of the country all who refused to be influenced in favor of Stanislaus, resulted in his unanimous election. Stanislaus on his part had solemnly promised his uncles to use his kingly influence to advance their cause, which was indeed the cause of all patriotic Poles.

But as the price of her support the Empress had imposed upon him conditions which made the keeping of that promise an utter impossibility. He promised "always to regard the interests of Russia as his own," to maintain a constant, unfeigned "devotion" to the Empress, and never to refuse to support her "just intentions."<sup>1</sup>

In addition to this he was throughout his reign under constant financial obligations to the Empress. Her ambassadors paid his debts and advanced him the money by which alone he was able to avoid the open bankruptcy to which his extravagance had reduced him.

Nor was this all. Throughout the length

<sup>1</sup> Lord, *The Second Partition of Poland*, p. 48.

and breadth of his kingdom he was cordially hated and despised by the vast majority of his subjects. By the conservatives he was hated as a reformer, by the many opponents of the Czartoryski as a member of their family, and by the people at large as the tool of Russia.

Altogether his position and that of Poland under him seemed well-nigh hopeless from the start. But on the other hand, the whole situation was so complicated, so many interests were concerned with the solution of the Polish question, and the Poles themselves displayed so fine and patriotic a spirit and really accomplished so much in the dark days that followed the first partition, that one cannot but wonder if events might not have taken a different path had the King assumed from the first a strong position about constitutional reform. There is reason to suppose that the Empress had not made any hard-and-fast decision as to the best way to treat Poland. Her Chief Minister, Count Panin, believed that a reasonably strong and well-governed Poland would be more useful to Russia than a weak and anarchical one. So did Prince Repnin, Catharine's Ambassador at Warsaw, and both men had much influence with her. Frederick the Great was a strong influence on the other side. He reminded her

of the Treaty of 1764, and warned her of the dangers of a Poland strong enough to oppose her control. But after all, Frederick regarded Poland as primarily Russia's affair, and if the King of Poland had stood strongly by his party and his principles, urged reform uncompromisingly, and let all Europe know what he was doing, the Empress might have yielded. She would certainly have found it somewhat difficult to refuse. That, however, was just what King Stanislaus did not do. Uncompromising devotion to principle was something of which he was constitutionally incapable. Prince Repnin had only to threaten him with the withdrawal of the Empress's favor (and battalions!) to make him give way on any and all points at issue. The King began his reign with an appeal to the Empress to assist in the abolition of the *liberum veto*. When she refused, the Reform Party tried to put their measure through the Diet in spite of Russian opposition. When the Russian and Prussian Ambassadors protested, the Prince Chancellor defied them, and said he would rather see Poland conquered by force of arms than subject to such dictation.<sup>1</sup> But the King gave way before their threats, withdrew his support from the bill, thus desert-

<sup>1</sup> Bain, *Last King of Poland*, p. 79.

ing his uncles and their cause, and allowed the measure to fail. And although the King burst into tears when the Ambassador thanked him for his services to Russia in this matter, his tears did not prevent his taking an exactly similar position the following year (1767), when, at the instigation of Russian and Prussian gold, the worst elements in Poland formed the Confederation at Radom, and requested the Empress to guarantee the perpetuity of the existing Polish Constitution — which meant that no Diet could ever change it without her consent. Though the King protested feebly at first, he finally yielded unconditionally. So well did the Russians appreciate the value of his subservience that in the important matter of the Dissidents Prince Repnin himself suggested that the King ought to be rewarded for his services to Russia.

This matter of the Dissidents was one that stirred Poland to the depths. Few matters of public concern could rouse the interest of the Polish peasant and the lesser nobles, but an attack on their religion was one of these few, and in the proposition to put the Orthodox on terms of equality with Roman Catholics they saw a blow at the very vitals of their religious life. Every one in Poland, whatever his class

or party, saw that the proposition was an impossible one, and not only King Stanislaus and other Poles of position, but even her own ambassador advised Catharine to let the matter drop. Perhaps the worst feature of the situation was that the Dissidents themselves, in whose behalf this so-called reform was being demanded, did not want equality, and petitioned the Empress to let them alone! They had had since 1686 entire freedom of religion, and the only point of inequality with Roman Catholic Poles was their ineligibility to hold office. And they did not want to hold office. Almost without exception, as Prince Repnin reported to Catharine, they were simple peasants, quite ignorant of public affairs, and wholly unfitted, as well as unwilling, to take part in public life. Catharine's plan of making a party of them to represent her interests at Court was quite impossible. It would have been ridiculous, indeed, if it had not been so serious a blunder.

In the face of full knowledge of the situation, however, Catharine persisted in her plan, and by means of bribery and intimidation, the imprisonment of leaders, and the enlistment in her interests of all the factors in Poland opposed to the Czartoryski and the party of reform, suc-

ceeded in pushing her bill enfranchising Dissenters through a subservient Diet, and, worst of all, getting the King's sanction for it. This task accomplished, the Empress thought her troubles with Poland were over. In reality they were just begun.

As news of the action of the Diet spread through the country, a great wave of opposition to this betrayal of their religion by their King rolled up, and broke in the distant Ukranian province of Bar, where the so-called "Confederation of Bar" was formed, and a great religious insurrection was preached. Many thousands of peasants and lesser nobles enlisted under the banner of the insurrection, which bore upon it the image of the Virgin, the Crucifix, and the motto, "To conquer or die for religion and liberty." All Poland was soon in civil war, and envoys were sent to Turkey and France, asking their aid against Russia and Prussia. Both governments were rather favorable to the enterprise. Turkey was never loath to attack Russia, and needed little urging from France to make her declare war, which she did in October, 1768. France also appealed to Austria, closely bound to her, by the Treaty of 1756, to aid Poland.

Catharine was taken by surprise, and had

the Turks acted promptly and coöperated wisely with the Poles the situation might have been a difficult one for her. But the Turks were not ready, and that gave her time to attack the Poles separately. The Confederates themselves were no mean fighters, though they had no organization and little discipline. They never succeeded in getting a real army into the field, but for four long years they kept the Russians busy, and devastated the country by a savage guerrilla warfare. "While the Poles massacred in the name of the Catholic religion, the Russians massacred in the name of tolerance."

Meanwhile also Catharine had called upon Frederick the Great to carry out the Treaty of 1764 by coming to her aid. Frederick, however, on his part, had no desire or intention of going to war. He knew that Austria also was very desirous of maintaining peace, and he hoped by an understanding with her to prevent the Russo-Turkish War altogether and limit the conflict to Poland. By the beginning of 1769 he saw that this could not be done. His task then became that of limiting the war to Russia and Turkey, and thus preventing a European conflagration, but Frederick's plan did not end there. He had long coveted Polish Prussia,



which formed a great wedge of territory effectively separating his province of East Prussia from his central German territories. He thought he saw in the existing situation an opportunity to acquire that territory.

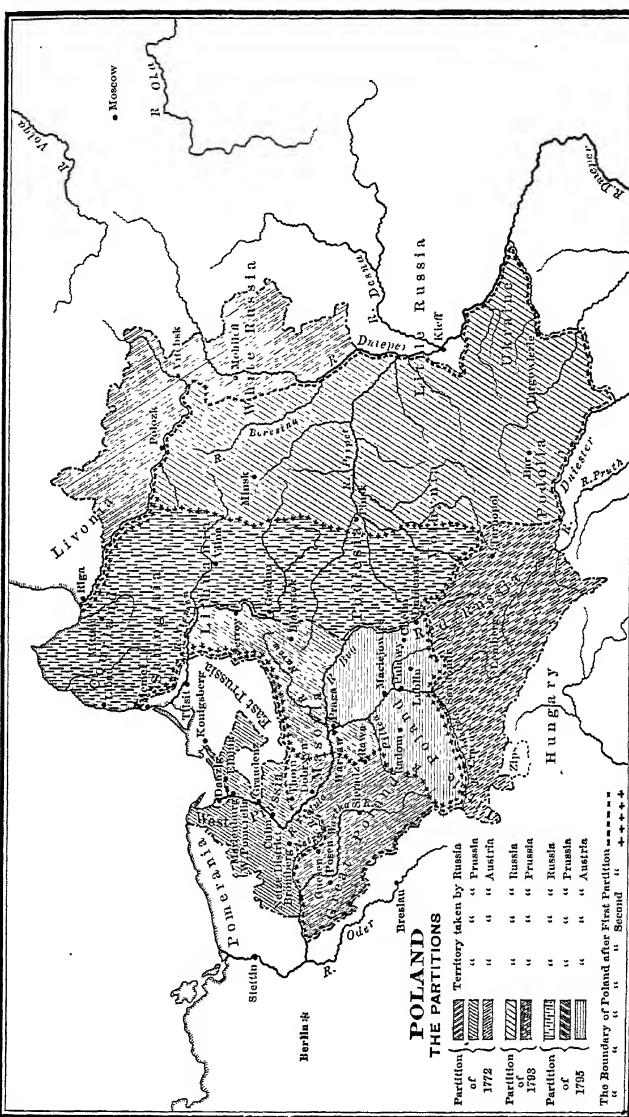
The chief danger of the war becoming general lay in Russian interference with Austrian interests in southeastern Europe. Austria regarded the region of the Danube as her preserve, and Frederick knew that she would never consent to Russia's annexation of the Danubian principalities, Wallachia and Moldavia (the modern Kingdom of Roumania), which Russia would inevitably claim, among other territories, as reward for the brilliant victories she was winning against the Turks. In such a situation Austria would almost inevitably be drawn into the war, and, on account of the system of international alliances, the entrance of Austria would mean that the war became European. As Austria could do little in a war against both Turkey and Russia without his help, and he was resolved not to fight, he suggested that Austria offer her services as mediator between the warring countries, and propose that Russia indemnify herself by the annexation of Polish rather than Turkish territory; and to offset that increase of territory on the part of Russia, that

Austria and Prussia each be allowed a slice of the same helpless country.

Although this was not her first and preferred plan, Catharine was not averse to it, as she could use the opportunity to take possession of certain Polish territories which would give her a defensible frontier on the west, which she had long desired and had probably intended to take when the chance offered, as it did now. It was from the Austrian Empress Maria Theresa that the chief opposition to the plan came, but she finally yielded, and it was agreed that each participant should have territory of the same value as the others, and it was tacitly understood that each should have the particular territories he most desired.

By the treaty signed July 25, 1772, Russia secured White Russia (Polotsk, Vitebsk, and Mohilev) and Polish Livonia, which gave her the rivers Dwina, Dnieper, and Drusch as her frontier. Austria had Red Russia and Galicia, with a little piece of Podolia, while Prussia's share included Ermeland, West or Polish Prussia exclusive of Danzig, the Netze district, Kulmerland exclusive of Thorn, and part of Cujavia.

The next step was to make King Stanislaus convoke the Diet and force that body to go



# **POLAND** **THE PARTITIONS**

Partition of	Territory taken by
1772	Russia
1793	Prussia
1795	Austria
1772	Russia
1793	Prussia
1795	Austria
1772	Russia
1793	Prussia
1795	Austria

The Boundary of Poland after First Partition -----  
 " " " " Second " + + + + +  
 " " " " Third " . . . . .



through the form of ratifying the partition treaty. As a preliminary, all three powers took the precaution to occupy the territories they claimed with their respective troops, and to issue proclamations of annexation to the inhabitants. The elections to the Diet also were so carefully guided by the bribes and threats of the occupying Powers that the Diet (which the King, though loudly protesting, had yet been obliged to convoke) was largely composed of their creatures. Under such circumstances immediate ratification seemed a foregone conclusion, but it was not until September, 1773, after nearly fourteen months of delay, that the Diet could be induced to take the final step by which Poland signed away nearly a third of her territory and something more than a third of her population.

## 2. THE NATIONAL REVIVAL AND THE SECOND PARTITION

The years following the first partition were years of momentous import in Polish history. In spite of the losses and humiliations of the partition, they were years of reviving prosperity and hope.

Russia, it is true, governed the country absolutely, and in her own interests, through the

Russian Ambassador, who was the adviser, mentor, and close friend of King Stanislaus. But the Empress had come to realize that her interests would be better served by good government than by anarchy in Poland. So, after the first partition had been ratified, Russia put through the Diet of 1773 the so-called "Constitution of 1773." Under this Constitution the "Permanent Committee," or Executive Council, governed the country. It consisted of thirty-six members, eighteen Senators and eighteen Deputies elected by the Diet every two years, and was divided into five departments — War, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Justice, and Police. It was hated, indeed, as a Russian institution, but it gave to Poland a unity, order, and economy of administration unknown to her before.

Also, as long as Poland remained politically quiet and subservient, Russia made no objection to activities along other lines, and there were started during these years economic and social reforms of lasting value — reforms which in fifty years would have transformed Poland from a mediæval to a modern state, and which, even in the brief dozen years allowed to them, gave the country a good start on the upward path.

Poland in 1773 was almost entirely an agricultural country. She was one of the granaries of Europe, exporting yearly vast amounts of grain through her great Baltic port, Danzig. Her rich lands were almost wholly in the hands of the nobility, who paid no taxes and worked their vast tracts by practically unpaid serf labor. Under such conditions the profits were enormous, in spite of the fact that almost no improvements in methods of farming had been introduced for two centuries. The first partition, however, made a great change in these conditions. Many landowners found their lands greatly reduced, and more important still, the King of Prussia was now in control of the trade of the Vistula, and imposed ruinous duties or tolls, thus reducing greatly the profits from the trade still left to them.

The Government of Poland also by the first partition lost about one half its revenue, from the Crown lands occupied by the partitioning Powers, from duties on merchandise sent to Danzig, which now enriched Prussia, and especially from the salt mines taken over by Austria, which had been the chief source of revenue for the Crown.

These losses meant that the Government was obliged to find new sources of revenue. Among

them a general land tax, imposed for the first time in 1774, still further diminished the profits of the nobles. As a matter of sheer necessity, therefore, even the conservative element among the nobility seconded the efforts of the reformers to develop new industries in Poland, and by the application of modern scientific methods to increase the productiveness of the old.

As a result, manufactures sprang up all over the country — there were few magnate families who did not start at least one; the roads were improved so that communication was not only possible, but travel was stimulated; rivers were dredged and widened, and a system of canals planned and partly built, by which the many rivers of Poland were connected with the Black Sea, thus opening new markets. All this meant new life for the towns, whose existence had been stagnant for two centuries. Warsaw, for example, increased in size from 30,000 to 160,000 inhabitants. Trade increased in spite of Prussia's exactions; Polish manufactured goods appeared in foreign markets for the first time in her history; and a middle class, prosperous, educated, and enterprising, came into existence, and supplied an element in the national life which Poland had long needed.

As a result of the reviving prosperity of the



country and the fiscal reforms of the Permanent Council, the government revenues were twice as great in 1788 as in the early years of the reign of King Stanislaus. The army also, which by 1788 had been increased from almost nothing to eighteen thousand men, was trained according to the Prussian model, officered from the new cadet school, and regularly paid.

At the same time the Education Commission, established in 1774, had begun an entire reorganization of education — a reform most urgently needed, and which yielded large results in a comparatively short time.

Until 1773, when they were expelled from Poland, the Jesuits had had entire control of the education of the country, and their methods were those of the sixteenth century and earlier. The confiscation of the property of the Order gave the Commission something to work with, and they introduced an entirely new system, from the elementary school to the university, based on the same principles as the system which the Revolution was introducing into France. A very real intellectual revival both dictated and followed these measures. Once more, after two centuries of isolation, Poland came into contact with current European ideas. The "enlightenment" of the

eighteenth century and the culture of revolutionary France, adopted with enthusiasm in Poland, broke up the old provincialism of thought and the old ignorance of the modern world which had proved so fatal to her growth. The way the country rose to these opportunities and turned all its energies into reform shows that at bottom the nation was sound and capable of regeneration.

In all these enterprises King Stanislaus and the Patriot Party worked hand in hand, though their ideas as to the political future of Poland were very different.

The disastrous experiences which ended in partition had convinced the King that dependence on Russia was the necessary condition of all progress. His idea was by good behavior to merit rewards from his protector, and by services in time of need to win compensation which should take the form of enlarging both his prerogatives and the Polish army to the extent of making him really independent of Russia.

The Patriots, on the contrary, had learned quite a different lesson from the partition. They saw that the fatal mistake had been to trust Russia, and they realized that the first and indispensable step toward any real freedom was to cast off Russian influence altogether.

But all parties agreed that, whatever their plans for ultimate action might be, the time was not ripe. Poland was not ready. She must first be made so, and then await an opportunity. The whole national energy was turned, therefore, during the years 1775 to 1788, into national regeneration. As we have seen above, much was accomplished. But was it enough? That was the question that was anxiously and eagerly asked by all friends of freedom, when in 1788 the long-awaited opportunity seemed to present itself in the absorption of both Russia and her ally Austria in a war on the Turks. The general sentiment of the country believed that Poland's hour had struck, and was in favor of making the supreme effort. "Our sons and grandsons," the Dietine of Samogitia declared, "will not live to see a better occasion than we now have for setting our house in order, increasing the forces of the Republic, assuring our liberties . . . and reviving the once famous name of Poles."<sup>1</sup>

While the country talked, the leaders of both parties were busy maturing their respective plans. Even before hostilities began, King Stanislaus had approached the Empress with the project of an alliance against the Turks. In

<sup>1</sup> Lord, *The Second Partition of Poland*, p. 92.

return for the use of Poland's army, which King Stanislaus would command himself, Catharine was to permit an increase in the size of the Polish army, a considerable extension of the prerogatives of the King, an immediate subsidy for war expenses, and, after the war was over, the cession to Poland of Bessarabia and part of Moldavia, including the port of Akkerman. All these territories he expected their combined efforts would conquer from Turkey.

Catharine was very favorably inclined toward a closer alliance with Poland at this time, chiefly to prevent the possibility of a Prusso-Polish alliance, but she attached very little value to the services which the Polish army could render, and had no idea of allowing the King to use the occasion to strengthen his position. Accordingly, while accepting an alliance in principle, she made a counter-proposition as to terms, in which none of the King's requests were granted, and from which Poland would have gained no advantage whatever. Nevertheless the King accepted it, — perhaps he himself would have found it difficult to say why! — and convoked a Diet to ratify it. Just at this point, however, Prussia received information of the proposed alliance, and at once informed Russia that Prussia would regard its

ratification as a cause for war. The Polish alliance was not worth a new war to Russia, so the Empress gave up the plan, but as she openly said that she might take it up again when a more favorable occasion offered, the Prussians remained suspicious and far from reassured.

The leaders of the Patriots, meanwhile, recognizing the necessity of outside aid if they were to throw off the yoke of Russia, had made overtures to Prussia, and were anxiously waiting to see what she would do for them.

This was the situation when, on October 6, 1788, the famous Four Years' Diet, or as the Poles call it, the "Great Diet," came together amid a country-wide excitement and enthusiasm such as perhaps Poland had never known.

The members of the Diet were divided among three parties: the Royalists, or King's Party, Russian in its sympathies and in favor of a Russian alliance; the Patriots, or party of thoroughgoing reform, very anti-Russian and in favor of the Prussian alliance; and the Republican Party, consisting of the ultra-conservatives who desired to retain the old Constitution intact, who saw "despotism" in any orderly government, and extolled the sacred "freedom" of the old anarchy and the *liberum veto*.

The Royalists were at first the strongest party. They had been well organized by the King and the Russian Ambassador, and were prepared with a definite programme and a plan for putting it through. The control of the Diet was entirely lost to them, however, when at the very first regular session a note was read from the Prussian Envoy, protesting against a Russo-Polish alliance, and offering the Poles instead the alliance of Prussia.

Its effect on the Poles was most extraordinary. The chains of servitude seemed broken. A new and happy self-respect, born of the delightful experience of proffered friendship, gave them new courage and hope, and they hastened to express their hatred of Russia and all her works, not merely by words, but by deeds as well. Under Prussian protection the Patriots, into whose ranks men from all groups, and particularly from the King's Party, were now crowding, undid all Catharine's work in Poland. Bit by bit the whole structure of the government of the Permanent Committee was abolished, and this was followed by the bold demand that the Empress withdraw her troops from Polish soil. To the astonishment of every one, the Empress complied with the request, and by May, 1789, Poland was free of Russian control.

It seemed almost too good to be true! The joy of the Poles knew no bounds. But their enthusiastic satisfaction in their work did not blind the leaders to the fact that they owed their freedom to the protection of Prussia and to the absorption of the Empress in the Turkish war. They resolved, before that war was settled, to accomplish three things: a treaty with Prussia which should insure them her continued protection; a new Constitution which should regenerate the country; and an hereditary kingship which should preserve Poland from outside interference.

In spite of the apparent friendliness of Prussia, the treaty was far from easy to arrange, and it was a year before it was finally and formally signed (May, 1790).

The root of the difficulty was that Prussia's chief reason for desiring a Polish alliance was to get more Polish territory. The King of Prussia wanted Danzig and Thorn to round out his boundaries and complete his acquisitions of 1772, and he coveted Great Poland as a protection to Silesia and as linking up that territory with East Prussia. Prussia wanted to get the Poles to cede part of this territory to her as the price of a political and commercial alliance. The wiser ones among the Polish leaders real-

ized that Poland must expect to pay for an alliance, and that her territory was about all she had to pay with, and they were prepared to accept the arrangement. But the Diet and the country would not consider it for a moment. All their old distrust of Prussia flared up, and for a time it seemed as though there would be no treaty. The King of Prussia, however, wanted the alliance of Poland at this time for another reason (he was trying to form a league against Austria), so the commercial treaty and the question of territory were waived for the time being, and a purely political alliance was signed, by which the contracting parties guaranteed each other's territories, and the King of Prussia promised that in case "any foreign Power . . . should seek to assert the right to interfere in the internal affairs of the Republic of Poland, the King of Prussia will first endeavor by his good offices to prevent hostilities . . . but if these should not prove effective . . . His Majesty the King of Prussia will then assist that Republic according to Article IV" (i.e., render military assistance).<sup>1</sup>

The question whether the Prussian alliance was a wise move for Poland is one on which there was then and still is great difference of

<sup>1</sup> Lord, p. 126.



opinion. There is no reason to suppose that the men who made the treaty were ignorant of the very grave dangers for Poland that lay in this course. They knew that Prussia wanted Polish territory, that self-interest was pretty certain to be the only motive in a Prussian alliance, and that as soon as that interest was served they could hope for nothing from Prussian friendship. But on the other hand, was an alliance on better terms at all likely to be offered to Poland? Was it not, after all, inevitable that a country in Poland's desperate situation must take desperate chances in order to save herself? There is no secure, safe course for a state too weak to protect her own independence. She must get what she can out of the chance coincidence of her interests with those of more powerful states. The Prussian alliance, at any rate, offered the opportunity to Poland to free herself from Russia, who, the Poles believed, and probably rightly, was unalterably opposed to any improvement in their condition.

The European situation was, moreover, just at this time peculiarly favorable to their interests. All the Powers were alarmed by the spectacular successes of Russia in her war against the Turks, and by the danger to Europe involved in Russia's annexation of the vast

territories conquered by her. The English Minister, Pitt, had formed the Triple Alliance of England, Holland, and Prussia in the interests of European peace, and he now planned to expand the alliance, by the admission of Sweden, Denmark, and Poland, into a great federation pledged to maintain the territorial integrity of its members. In a word, the Federative System was to protect weak states against the policy of conquest and annexation by which Catharine II and Frederick the Great had built up their empires. It was really directed against the ambitions of Russia, and its immediate purpose was to force Russia to relinquish all her Turkish conquests.

The Prussian alliance, then, was to be for Poland only the door through which she was to enter the Triple Alliance and Pitt's great Federative System, where she would find powerful allies in her inevitable struggle against Russia. But Pitt's plan for Poland did not stop here. Her trade with Russia was very important to England, and before breaking with Russia it was necessary to provide other sources of supply for the grain, timber, and other important articles that England got there. Pitt saw that Poland could supply them, and his idea was to strengthen Poland's independence and to estab-

lish close commercial relations between her and England. Commercial relations with England, however, necessarily included Prussia, because, in the first place, Prussia was England's ally, and in the second, Prussia controlled Poland's outlet on the Baltic. Pitt proposed to meet this situation by a commercial treaty between Prussia and Poland under the guaranty of England. Prussia was to free Polish trade on the Vistula from all the restrictions which Poland had so deeply resented, giving her practically free trade with Europe, and in return Poland was to cede Danzig and Thorn to Prussia.

But as in the earlier negotiation, the cession of Danzig and Thorn was just what the Poles could not bring themselves to accept. The Patriot leaders, who had accepted the proposition as a necessary sacrifice, might have been able to bring the Diet to their point of view had the Triple Alliance actually gone to war with Russia and offered Poland the opportunity to join. But the war did not come off. Though Catharine stood firm, and a conflict seemed inevitable, at the last moment Pitt himself was obliged to back down because the English Parliament refused to support a war with Russia. Catharine was left free to make practi-

cally her own terms with the Turks (Treaty of Jassy, January, 1792), and Prussia, completely disgusted with England, resolved to get out of the Triple Alliance as soon as she could. She resolved also to throw over her treaty with the Poles, and to open negotiations with Russia for a new partition of Poland, as the only means left of acquiring Danzig and Thorn.

As for Poland, her doom was sealed. She had staked her all and lost. Her refusal to pay with her provinces for the Prussian alliance, and the failure of the Federative System, destroyed her last chance of outside aid in her inevitable struggle with Russia. She had now to fight it out alone — and lose.

But for the moment this was not recognized at Warsaw. Prussia's perfidy was not yet known to the Polish Government, nor indeed to any one but Russia, and meanwhile the success of the Patriot Party in making a new Constitution for Poland, and the rallying of the country to its support, had filled the whole nation with hope and faith in their future.

In September, 1789, a committee was appointed by the Diet to draw up a constitution, but it was not until 1791 that much more than the adoption of a statement of principles was accomplished. The delay was due not only

to the preoccupation of the Assembly with other matters, — finance, the army, and the Prussian treaty especially, — but also to the fact that it was only after nearly two years of debate that the nation was sufficiently educated in political ideas and possibilities to know what it really wanted. By the end of 1790, however, the country had pronounced quite definitely in favor of the hereditary kingship vested in the Elector of Saxony and his line, and the great majority in the Diet recognized the necessity of a strong government, able to hold the country together and protect it against attacks from without. In December the King, who up to this time had held persistently aloof, finally accepted the Prussian treaty and the Patriot programme. And now the Patriots took a desperate resolve. Convinced that their well-being depended upon having a constitution in actual operation before the end of the Russo-Turkish War freed the hands of Russia, and realizing that it could never be done by the slow method of Diet procedure, the leaders resolved to present a constitution ready made, and force its adoption *en bloc* at a single session of the Diet. The King was particularly interested in this plan. He himself drew up the project of a Constitution modeled on English

lines, which, being approved by his associates, he resolved to present to the Diet. The time chosen was immediately after the Easter recess, when the attendance would be small, and the conspirators, having sent secret word to their own supporters to be present, could easily command a majority.

Accordingly, the 3d of May, the Deputation on Foreign Interests reported alarming rumors of a new partition of Poland, said to be under consideration by Russia and Prussia. The King then produced the new Constitution and urged its immediate acceptance, in the face of this new danger. After some very heated debate, in which the majority were, however, distinctly on the side of the King, he took the oath to support the new Constitution, the majority of the Nuncios or Deputies taking part in it by holding up their right hands. Then, calling upon all who loved their country to follow him, he went to the church, where they all renewed their oaths upon the altar.

All Warsaw then gave itself up to rejoicings "unalloyed by a single act or word that might disgrace the auspicious occasion," the only accident worthy of note being that the King lost his hat — but even this was regarded by many as of happy omen!

The Constitution thus launched was a good one. The abolition of the old *liberum veto* and of the right of "confederation" paved the way for a really strong government, vested in an hereditary king with large powers, governing through a Council of Ministers responsible to the Diet, which could remove them at any time by a two-thirds vote. The legislature was bicameral, with the preponderance of power in the lower House elected by the nation. A property qualification for voting in the Diet was established, serfdom was abolished, and political rights were restored to the towns and cities arbitrarily deprived of them for two hundred years.

Under happier circumstances this Constitution might have saved Poland by bringing her people under the discipline they needed so sadly. But it was too late. Though forced for the moment to acquiesce in Poland's reassertion of her independence by her own absorption in the Turkish war, Catharine had neither forgotten nor forgiven Poland for its break with Russia, and as soon as her hands were free of the Turks, she turned to the task of its reconquest.

Through Potemkin she opened negotiations with certain Poles who were opposed to the

new Government and Constitution, and wanted nothing more than the chance to replace it with the old anarchy. The leaders of this party were Felix Potocki, Seweryn Rzewuski, and Ksawery Branicki. They assured the Empress that the whole country was with them, and would rise as one man against the existing régime as soon as the chance was offered. (They wanted, however, 100,000 Russian troops to aid them in their enterprise!) They fell in very readily with the Empress's plan to form a "Confederation" which should overthrow the Royal Government, put in a Constitution approved by the Empress, and conclude with Russia a treaty of eternal alliance.

The Empress meanwhile wrote to Prussia and Austria that she had determined to destroy the innovations in Poland, so detrimental to the common interests of the Powers, and suggested that Prussia and Austria join in this "regulation" of Polish affairs. The King of Prussia saw his chance, and at once decided to throw over the Polish treaty and make a new partition of Poland which should give him Danzig and Thorn and part of Great Poland as the condition of his alliance with Russia. In March, 1792, Potocki, Rzewuski, Branicki, and a dozen of their creatures came to Petersburg,



where they were entertained and fêted by the Empress. These traitors claimed to be the representatives of the whole Polish people, longing to return to a republican system of government. They drew up an Act of Confederation which purported to have originated in Poland among the Poles, and was falsely dated "Targowica, May 14," though it was really signed in Petersburg on April 27.

The signers of this document declared their purpose to be the defense of the Roman Catholic religion, the liberty and equality of the nobility, the territorial integrity of the state, and the ancient republican form of government. The statement that the control of the army by the "usurpers" at Warsaw had obliged them to appeal for protection to the great Catharine, "whose grandeur of character gave well-grounded hope of her disinterestedness," was followed by a formal request for aid addressed in the name of the "Confederated Polish Nation" to Catharine as "that immortal sovereign who was the refuge of peoples and kings," and "the tutelary divinity" of Poland.<sup>1</sup>

The fiction of legal right being thus created, the Empress on May 18, 1792, gave warning at Warsaw that she intended to take action in

<sup>1</sup> Lord, p. 276.

behalf of violated treaties, and on the same night sent her troops across the frontier.

The Poles were wholly unprepared. They had refused to believe that there was danger, trusting in the Prussian treaty and the very friendly attitude of Austria, who really wished to befriend them and had tried to form an alliance against Russia in their behalf. The Poles believed in this alliance long after it had proved an impossibility.

On May 21 the Diet met to hear the Russian note. It was received in silence, except where the Empress said she was sending her troops to restore the liberties of the Polish nation, when the Assembly burst into laughter and groans. The King made a manly and spirited speech concerning defense, but hoped that when better informed the Empress would stay her hand!

The Diet voted a war-tax, appointed the King Commander-in-Chief of all the forces of the Republic, — an unparalleled thing in Polish history, — and gave him power to make a *levée en masse* if it should prove necessary. Having taken these measures, all it could do to provide for Poland's fatal hour, the Four Years' Diet adjourned May 29, 1792.

The King then made a formal appeal to the King of Prussia to carry out their treaty. It

was a heavy blow when Prussia refused, on the quibble that the Constitution of the 3d of May was subsequent to this treaty, and not guaranteed by it!

Austria was sympathetic, but was herself deeply involved in a war with Revolutionary France, and could give no practical aid. Poland must fight alone against the might of Russia, with a little army inadequately equipped, badly trained, and led by a talented but entirely inexperienced general only twenty-nine years of age, Prince Joseph Poniatowski, the nephew of King Stanislaus. In General Thaddeus Kosciuszko, appointed to the chief subordinate command, Poland had, however, an officer of talent, experience, and high patriotism.

These Polish leaders and their little army put up a splendid fight in the Ukraine against overwhelmingly greater numbers. And they were not defeated. In fact, after two months in the field the Polish army was in far better condition than at the start, and was eager to continue the struggle. But the King surrendered to Russia at this point, and all was lost. For a month he had been negotiating secretly with the Empress, trying to get her to disavow the Confederation of Targowica and to accept the

Constitution of the 3d of May in a modified form, coupled with an "eternal alliance" between Poland and Russia. When the Empress absolutely refused, and ordered him to accept the Confederation, the King, though he professed himself overwhelmed with grief, called the Council and laid the letter before them, and professing to believe that the military defense of the country was hopeless, advised the acceptance of the Empress's terms.

Though the King had taken pains to have present in the Council a majority of pro-Russian members, yet there were not wanting a few patriots to protest against this betrayal of the country. Ostrowski urged the King to emulate the courage and constancy of John Casimir, under whom Poland had faced and conquered worse conditions even than the present ones, while Ignacy Potocki begged the King to abdicate rather than submit to Russia. The King listened, but was unconvinced, and finally announced his decision to accede to the Confederation.

Grief, rage, and despair followed the announcement of his treachery to the country. Kosciuszko, indeed, wished to abduct the King and hold him prisoner while they continued the war in his name, but Prince Joseph had not the

courage for this. In the end Prince Joseph, Kosciuszko, and a score of other officers resigned their commissions and left the country, as did many of the Patriot leaders in civil positions, choosing exile rather than compromise with Russia.

Meanwhile, after long negotiations, Prussia and Russia had agreed upon the terms of a second partition of the country, and in January, 1793, a treaty was signed by which Prussia was to have Danzig and Thorn, so long desired, all that was left of Great Poland, and parts of Cujavia and Masovia — briefly the vast region known to-day as South Prussia. The treaty gave Russia those parts of Podolia and the Ukraine not already hers, together with parts of both Volhynia and Podlesia. By the two partitions she had now acquired all of Little Russia, all of White Russia, and part of Lithuania.

To force Poland to ratify these arrangements was the final step, and one of the Empress's first official acts after her return to power in Poland was to convene the Polish Diet for this purpose.

The Diet met at Grodno, June 17, 1793, but its coercion proved an unexpectedly difficult task. The Russian representative, Baron von Sievers,

had spent large sums of money on this election, with the result that the great majority of the deputies were ready to vote for Russia. There were, however, some honest, patriotic men in this melancholy assembly, the so-called "Zealots," who opposed themselves uncompromisingly to a partition or even to a discussion of "indemnity" with Russia and Prussia. "If we perish," they said, "let us perish with honor, not with shame"; and they fought desperately, eloquently, and passionately over every inch of ground. They knew they could not save themselves, but they fought for time, in the forlorn hope that some foreign power or some fortunate accident might save them. The King at first took a brave position on their side. In his opening speech he said he had acceded to the Confederation of Targowica, because in so doing he thought to assure the integrity and independence of Poland, and declared that he had "resolved under no conditions to sign any treaty depriving the Republic of even the smallest part of its possessions"! There is reason to believe, however, that in spite of all this the King had decided beforehand to yield in the end. Certain it is that as soon as Russia withheld the payment of his revenues his opposition broke down completely, and he

became the facile tool of Sievers. The Zealots continued their struggle to the last ditch. Finally, however, after four weeks of opposition to Russian violence, knowing themselves without the means of defense, and wishing to avoid useless bloodshed, the Diet by a large majority agreed to the treaty with Russia. The treaty with Prussia, whose perfidy had brought them to this pass, they absolutely refused to accept. Even after the Russian Ambassador had obliged Prussia to give up half of the "rectified" frontier that the Prussians had occupied over and above the lands included in their arrangement with Russia, and also to promise a commercial treaty under Russian mediation which should reduce the exorbitant tariffs levied by Prussia on Polish trade on the Vistula, the Poles still would not yield. Finally, on September 23, the meeting-place of the Diet was surrounded with soldiers and cannon, a Russian general and twelve officers took seats in the Diet, and that body was informed that they were prisoners until the treaty with Prussia was passed.

Having tried in vain every other means of resistance, the Diet lapsed into complete silence. For four hours the famous "Dumb Session" continued, the silence broken only by the

threats and blusterings of the Russian general. At last, near four in the morning, at the insistence of the impatient Russians the Marshal of the Diet put the question. It was twice repeated without response, whereupon the Marshal declared that, since silence was a sign of consent, and no one had spoken, the motion was unanimously carried! The session was then declared closed, and, still in silence, the members left the hall.

There were yet other humiliations in store for the defeated Poles. Although Poland was now reduced to a very small state, — only about sixteen thousand square miles contained in the three small provinces of Masovia, Podlachia, and Samogitia, — the Empress wished to take no chances regarding its submissiveness, and before the Diet of Grodno was dissolved she forced it to ratify a treaty with Russia, putting practically the entire control of the army and the foreign relations of the country in the hands of Russia. This treaty, as one of the deputies of the Diet remarked, made Poland a Russian province.

This same Diet also was obliged to annul all of the acts of the Four Years' Diet, and to reenact all the evil features of the old constitution — the *liberum veto*, the elective kingship,



the privileges of the *szlachta*, and the serfdom of the peasantry. Truly the vengeance of Catharine was complete!

### 3. THE REVOLUTION OF 1794 AND THE THIRD PARTITION

At first the Poles were stunned by the enormity of this latest calamity which had befallen them. This feeling, however, soon gave place to an indignation and hatred for Russia which was still further enhanced by the increasing harshness of the Russian rule. Baron von Sievers, kindly and desirous of mitigating Poland's misfortunes wherever he conscientiously could, was succeeded by General Igelström, an insolent and arbitrary despot. The Poles would surely have been as unworthy of independence as their worst critics make them out had they submitted without protest to this last ignominy. But they had no thought of submitting. As all open means of protest were denied them, they resorted to conspiracy. Secret societies were formed, plots for an insurrection hatched under the very nose of General Igelström, and the plotters at home were in constant correspondence with exiles abroad, particularly a group in Saxony which included Kosciuszko and the leaders of the Four Years' Diet. These patriots

did their best to find support for a Polish insurrection among the states of Europe, but in vain.

Meanwhile General Igelström, knowing that there were plots, but unable to discover them, resolved to disband the greater part of the Polish army, upon which the Poles must chiefly rely in any insurrection. Despair at this move led a brigade commanded by General Madalinski to refuse when ordered to disband. Instead, they marched toward Cracow, where the citizens, encouraged by this news, rose *en masse* and expelled the Russian garrison. Kosciuszko, who had hurried into Poland upon receiving news of the rising, was proclaimed Commander-in-Chief by the nobles in Cracow, and issued a manifesto calling on all patriots to rally to his standard and to send him arms and provisions. "Furnish men capable of bearing arms," he says. "Do not refuse the necessary provisions of bread, biscuit, etc. Send horses, shirts, boots, cloth, and canvas for tents. . . . The last moment is arrived, in which despair, in the midst of shame and reproach, puts arms in our hands. Our hope is in the *contempt of death* which can alone enable us to ameliorate our fate and that of our posterity."

The conditions implied in this manifesto were

far from hopeful for the Polish cause, but the country responded splendidly. All classes rallied to Kosciuszko's standard, even the peasants coming in great numbers, armed, where they had nothing else, with their scythe-blades. The King set the example of giving all his plate and a large part of his income to the national cause, and the nobles followed his example to such an extent that the army was soon abundantly supplied.

At Raslawice Kosciuszko met and defeated the Russian detachment sent after Madalinski, and Warsaw responded to General Igelström's attempt to disarm the Polish troops there by a rising which obliged Igelström to evacuate the city (April 18). The insurgents then set up a provisional government under the Constitution of the 3d of May, and recognized Kosciuszko as Dictator. Five days later Wilna, the capital of Lithuania, expelled its Russian garrison, other lesser towns followed its example, and soon the Russians were in full retreat to the frontier. Poland was once more free! She even began to dream of recovering her dismembered provinces under Austrian and Prussian rule.

But the moment of triumph was as brief as it was happy. The King of Prussia was already on his way to Poland with an army, and Catha-

rine of Russia was collecting, for the same destination, every soldier that could be spared from the south, where preparations were on foot for a great Turkish war. Catharine was determined this time to be done with Poland. "The time has come," she said, "not only to extinguish to the last spark the fire that has been kindled in our neighborhood, but to prevent any possible rekindling of the ashes."

Against such antagonists Kosciuszko's position was hopeless from the first, but he made a splendid fight. His army was small, badly equipped, and badly disciplined. That unanimity in the cause of freedom which the nation had shown in the first weeks of the rising had given way to the old suspicions and dissensions so characteristic of the Poles and so fatal to their cause. The democratic party in the towns, disciples of the French Jacobins, who wanted to set up a Reign of Terror in Poland, the peasants who wanted to be freed from serfdom, and the nobles, conservative to the core, who felt they had already gone too far in agreeing to the provisions of the Constitution of the 3d of May, all suspected one another, and agreed only in their suspicions of Kosciuszko. The King had from the beginning been a negligible factor. Though kept under constant surveillance for

fear he would try to escape to Russia, he was otherwise treated with respect, but on the understanding that he should take no part in public affairs. Kosciuszko was the real ruler of the country.

The arrival of the Russian troops from the south meant a speedy end to his power and to all his hopes. Swiftly, surely, and ruthlessly the Russian general, Suvároff, cut to pieces the Polish forces who opposed his march to Warsaw. Arrived there, he demanded the surrender of the city, and being refused, the Russians captured Praga, a suburb on the right bank of the river, massacred practically all the inhabitants, and burned the town. On November 8 they entered Warsaw, and Poland's freedom was ended.

The capitulation of the capital without resistance had been accomplished, however, only on condition that the soldiers of the garrison, who refused to lay down their arms, should be allowed to march out. The Russian general, in giving the permission, added that all those who chose this alternative might be sure of not escaping elsewhere, and that, when overtaken, no quarter would be given them. In spite of this threat, the whole garrison, to a man, marched out, accompanied by civilians in such

numbers that altogether their company counted thirty thousand souls.

Kosciuszko had been wounded and taken prisoner in a last vain attempt at Maciegowice, October 10, to check the advancing Russians. After his wound was healed he was sent to St. Petersburg, where he was kept a prisoner until the death of the Empress in 1796.

The political leaders of the revolution, including Count Ignacy Potocki, Zakrezewsky, the president of the Revolutionary Council, and three other of its members, shared a like fate. The troops still in the field, however, were allowed to capitulate on honorable terms. King Stanislaus, by Catharine's orders, went to Grodno, where he lived until her death, when the Emperor Paul invited him to St. Petersburg, gave him an ample pension, and the Marble Palace for a residence, where he lived in comfort, if not happiness, until his death in 1798. The Emperor Paul also freed Kosciuszko and his fellow prisoners in 1796. Kosciuszko, after visits to England and America, where he was received with almost unparalleled enthusiasm, made his home in France until his death in 1817.

Meanwhile Russia, Prussia, and Austria divided the remaining territories of Poland be-

tween them. Russia took in the south what remained of Volhynia and Podlesia, thus extending her boundary to the Bug; in the north Courland and Samogitia (thus giving her all the southeastern Baltic coast), and all of Lithuania east of the river Niemen. This partition, with the two earlier ones, thus restored to Russia all the territories conquered from her by Lithuania during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and gave her in addition the greater part of Lithuania itself. Poland proper was divided between the German Powers. Prussia secured what remained of Podlachia and of Masovia, including the city of Warsaw, and all of Lithuania west of the Niemen—the territories which to-day make up New East Prussia and New Silesia.

Austria acquired the district between the rivers Pilica, Vistula, and Bug, a region comprising all of Little Poland (the palatinates of Cracow, Sandomir, and Lublin), as well as parts of Red Russia (the Palatinate of Chelm) and of Podlachia.

The formal abdication of King Stanislaus on November 25, 1795, completed the process by which Poland was wiped off the map of Europe, and by a secret agreement the three sovereigns, “recognizing the necessity of abolishing every-

thing which may recall the memory of the existence of the Kingdom of Poland," pledged themselves never to use the name of Poland in reference to any of the territories acquired by them.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE GRAND DUCHY OF WARSAW

THE years following the third partition were bitter ones for Poland. Most of the nobles who had taken an active interest in public affairs and had escaped imprisonment were in exile, chiefly in Venice and Paris, engaged in the vain endeavor to enlist the interest of some of the powers of Europe in the cause of Poland. France and Turkey were the only powers that were favorably inclined toward Poland, and neither one was in a position to take up her cause actively.

The years 1796 and 1797, however, altered the situation materially in France. Napoleon Bonaparte, sent into Italy by the Directory in 1796 to fight the Austrians, in a campaign of surpassing brilliance had not only conquered them, but the King of Sardinia<sup>1</sup> and the Pope as well, and taken possession of all northern Italy for France. Napoleon had thus made himself the military hero of Europe, and was

<sup>1</sup> The Duke of Savoy was King in Sardinia and ruler of Piedmont.

already well started on the road to empire. In him the Poles saw a bright ray of hope for their future, and as early as 1796, through Count Oginski, the Polish "Confederacy" at Paris opened negotiations. Though telling them that the Poles must arm themselves and not depend on foreign help, Bonaparte certainly led them to think that he would aid their cause; with the result that the Polish general, Dombrowski, early in 1797 sought and received permission from the improvised government set up in Italy by the French to raise a Polish legion to enter the French service; and soon eight thousand Poles, forming two legions, were in arms, eager to enter the fray against their old enemy, Austria, and in so doing, as they fondly hoped, strike a blow for Polish independence. During the next few years the Polish legions bore their part, and bore it gloriously, in the French campaigns in Italy.

The First Legion, under Dombrowski, marched into Rome with the French when they turned out the Pope in 1798, and Dombrowski was allowed to take from Loreto the trophies, the Turkish flag and saber, which the Polish King, John Sobieski, had captured from the Turks after the siege of Vienna in 1683. The flag was henceforth always with the First

Legion, but the saber they sent to Kosciuszko, the greatest Polish hero since Sobieski.

During 1799 the legions took part in the battles of the Trebbia, Novi, and Mantua against the Austrians and their Russian allies. In these campaigns the legions were almost annihilated, but they were quickly replaced by new volunteers, so that in the campaign of 1800 nearly nine thousand Poles were engaged.

The Peace of Lunéville, February, 1801, which closed the Italian campaign, was a profound disappointment to the Poles, as no mention was made of them in it. Many of them quitted the French service in despair or disgust, and the rest were sent with the French contingent under General LeClerc, to reduce the island of St. Domingo, then in rebellion against the French. Few returned from this expedition, yellow fever carrying off most of those who were not killed in battle.



In spite of this sad ending, the Polish legions had done a real service to the Polish cause. They were the only representatives of their nation during those dark years, and their valor alone kept alive and fresh in the minds of an indifferent and forgetful Europe the memory of her great past.

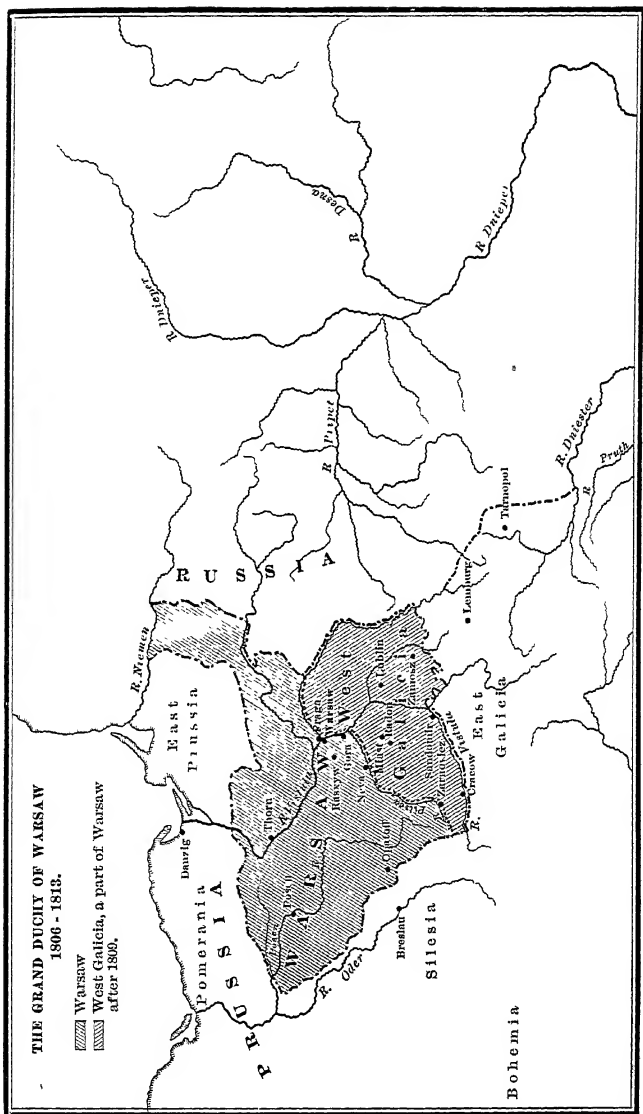
Brighter days seemed to dawn for Poland,

however, in 1806. In that year Napoleon conquered Prussia and took away from her all the Polish territories acquired by her at the second and third partitions, together with Kulmerland, Cujavia, and the Netze district acquired by the first partition, leaving her, of all her Polish lands, only West Prussia north of the Netze. These territories, with the exception of the district of Bialystok, ceded to Russia, and Danzig, which was made a free city under the protection of Russia and Saxony, were joined by Napoleon into the Duchy of Warsaw, an autonomous state with a Constitution modeled on that of the Empire in France.

In 1809 Napoleon made a new treaty with Austria, the Treaty of Vienna, by which Austria ceded to him all her Polish territories acquired by the third partition; namely, western or New Galicia, including Cracow, and the southeast corner of Old Galicia. The latter, Napoleon gave to his friend and ally, the Emperor of Russia, while West Galicia was added to the Duchy of Warsaw, which was then raised to the rank of a Grand Duchy. The King of Saxony was made Grand Duke, and nominally ruled the country, with the coöperation of a Diet of two houses, the lower House elected by the nobles and townspeople. The power of

**THE GRAND DUCHY OF WARSAW**  
1806 - 1813.

-  Warsaw  
 West Galicia, a part of Warsaw  
 after 1809.





the Grand Duke was greatly limited, however, by the fact that he was not allowed to appoint a viceroy, so that in his absence he had no personal representative in the duchy; and also by the fact that he had no control over the foreign relations of the country, France alone having a representative Resident at Warsaw. The real power, indeed, was vested in the hands of this Resident, who was Napoleon's personal representative.

The Constitution abolished serfdom in theory, but as no land was given to the peasants their condition was made worse thereby, rather than better, as they remained economically entirely dependent upon their former owners, and the legal fact of freedom released the latter from all responsibility for the peasants, and enabled them to take away the land and lease it to others, as well as to withdraw certain customary privileges, such as the use of the owner's wood and pasture land, from those who remained.

Civil equality was also established by law, but the Polish nobility resented it, and Napoleon did not care enough about it to oppose them, so the law was never enforced. The introduction of the Code Napoléon, on the contrary, was a real reform, and wrought a

great amelioration in Poland, and has remained in force ever since.

The real interests of the French in Poland were military. The Poles were excellent soldiers, and Napoleon gave just sufficient encouragement to their national hopes to get their loyal and devoted service.

From the first, however, there were many who had no faith in him, and held persistently aloof. Kosciuszko was one of these. Napoleon, knowing that a manifesto in his name would call the whole of Poland to the French colors, had done his best to win the Polish leader to his side. But Kosciuszko refused to come until Napoleon should actually annex the Russian provinces and declare the old kingdom re-established — which he never did.

Many Polish landowners also resented bitterly Napoleon's confiscation of their estates for the benefit of his marshals and generals. No less than twenty-seven of them were established in Poland, some of them on estates of enormous size.

Napoleon's military demands upon the country, also, were a heavy burden, and created a certain amount of disaffection. He made the country a vast recruiting ground, from which he had taken by 1812 something like ninety



thousand men. Ravaged by war, its trade with England greatly reduced when not entirely cut off by the Continental blockade, — and England was the chief market for the grain and timber that were Poland's great exports, — the country was in no condition to bear the burden of raising and supporting so many troops. By 1811 the deficit was twenty-one million francs, and M. de Pradt, Napoleon's Ambassador at Warsaw, reported a condition of general wretchedness. Nothing, he says, could exceed the misery of all classes. The army was not paid, the officers were in rags, the best houses were in ruins; the greatest lords were compelled to leave Warsaw from want of money to provide their tables. But in spite of doubts and disillusion, when Napoleon finally broke with Russia, and in the early summer of 1812 invaded the country, the great majority of the Poles still believed in him. The very existence of the Duchy of Warsaw made this faith inevitable. Prince Czartoryski said of it: "It is a sort of phantom of ancient Poland which produces an infallible effect on all who regard that country as their real fatherland. It is as if, after you had lost a dear friend, his shade should come to assure you that he will soon be restored to you in person."

Seventy thousand Poles, under Prince Joseph Poniatowski, formed the Fifth Corps of the Grande Armée when it marched into Russia. They believed that they were about to conquer Lithuania, add it to Warsaw, and thus create a reunited Poland. An extraordinary session of the Diet of the Grand Duchy, called just before the Russian invasion, gave official sanction to this view by declaring the Kingdom of Poland reconstituted, recalling all Poles from the Russian service, and declaring them absolved from their allegiance to the Russian Emperor.

The defeat and retreat of Napoleon dashed all these hopes. By February, 1813, the Russian army had driven the French from Lithuania, was invading the Grand Duchy itself, and once again Poland's capital city was in the hands of her old enemy, and her people awaiting the vengeance of the Russian ruler.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE "CONGRESS KINGDOM" AND THE REVOLUTION OF 1830

THE ruler of Russia at this time was the Emperor Alexander I, and he had no thought of exacting vengeance from the Poles. His policy was something very different, indeed, from vengeance. It was nothing less than the restoration of an autonomous and liberal government to a reunited Poland. This was an extraordinary policy for a Russian czar, — even with his condition that Poland must always remain a part of the Russian Empire, — and had indeed an interesting history.

Of an open, impressionable, and somewhat sentimental nature, the Emperor had very early become an ardent supporter of the principles of Rousseau, through the influence of his Swiss tutor, La Harpe; and even during the lifetime of his grandmother, the Empress Catherine, he had expressed his hatred and horror of her principles and policy, and had declared that when he came to the throne, he would give the subject peoples their liberty. His interest had been especially attracted to the Poles by their

heroism in the Revolution of 1794, and by the impression made upon his youthful imagination by Kosciuszko, whom his father, the Emperor Paul, had visited in prison, and on one occasion had taken his son with him. He was thus already strongly inclined to the Polish cause, before the chief influence in that direction came into his life in the person of young Prince Adam Czartoryski, son of Prince Adam Casimir, and grandson of the old Prince Palatine. This young man came to Petersburg in 1795 to beg the restoration of their estates to his family, and was made aide-de-camp to the young Grand Duke Alexander by the Empress. The two boys at once became the closest friends, and the outcome of that friendship was that Alexander resolved to restore to the Poles their lost territories and their lost liberties, and to rule them himself as a constitutional king.

When Alexander succeeded to the throne in 1801, he not only took measures to ameliorate the conditions of his own people, but he called Prince Adam Czartoryski to Russia and made him Curator of the new University of Wilna, which he made the center of Polish influence and Polish political propaganda. In 1804 he made Czartoryski Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and allowed him to work definitely

(though indirectly, on account of the opposition of Austria and Prussia to any such measure) toward the restoration of Poland to her frontiers of 1772. Czartoryski did this very largely by his championship of the principle of nationality, in order to accustom Europe to the idea as a basis for European reconstruction after the defeat of Napoleon. He tried also, in 1806, to draw Russia into a war with Prussia, by which Alexander might get possession of Prussia's Polish provinces and incorporate them in his Polish kingdom. The Emperor, however, was not willing to go so far. Some years of experience, and the councils of other ministers, to whom the Polish question was only one, and not the chief one, of many considerations which should form the policy of the Czar of all the Russias, had somewhat cooled his ardor for the Poles, or had at least convinced him that for the time being he could do nothing for them.

Instead, he made an alliance with their worst enemy, Prussia, against Napoleon, whereupon the Poles (even including Prince Adam Czartoryski) lost all faith in him, and were thus the more ready to turn to Napoleon when, after the defeat of the Prussians at Jena in 1806, he established the Duchy of Warsaw.

Alexander, however, had not lost interest in Poland, and when the events of 1812 made him master of the Duchy, thus giving him control of nearly nine tenths of the ancient Republic of Poland, he began at once to plan for the reunion of all the Poles in an autonomous free state. Knowing, however, that Austria and Prussia would hate his plan, and that the Russian people would oppose it violently, he said nothing publicly about Poland until the War of Liberation had overthrown Napoleon, and the Congress of Vienna had come together in 1814 to reorganize Europe. By that time his agents in Warsaw had already established a provisional government in the Grand Duchy under Prince Adam Czartoryski, and a committee of Poles, under the Grand Duke Constantine, was already at work on the reorganization of the Polish army. At Vienna the Emperor announced his plan of keeping the Grand Duchy and making it into a constitutional kingdom, ruled under a separate title by himself and his successors on the Russian throne. He had gained the consent of the King of Prussia to this plan by promising him all of Saxony in compensation. Saxony was to be taken away from its own king to punish him for his faithful friendship to Napoleon.

Austria, France, and England were one and all strongly opposed to the plan, and the question became one of the most difficult the Congress had to settle. At one time war seemed unavoidable, as neither side was willing to yield. Finally, however, the Emperor agreed to compromise regarding the territory to be included in his new kingdom. He would not yield the point of the kingdom itself. By this compromise only part of Saxony was sacrificed to Prussia, and instead of the rest, Prussia received back the Polish province of Posen, comprising about one fourth of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw. The Emperor also ceded back to Austria the province of Tarnapol, lost by her in 1809. The town of Cracow and its environs was declared by the Congress a free city, called the "Republic of Cracow," because neither Austria nor Russia would let the other have it.

Out of the remainder of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, a scant three quarters of it, which amounted to about one sixth only of the old Republic of Poland, the Emperor made his new Kingdom or "Czardom" of Poland, the "Congress Kingdom." Alexander reserved the right to add to the territory of this Kingdom at his pleasure, and undoubtedly intended to include a part if not the whole of Lithuania in it






ultimately, when he could see his way to do so without too great offense to his Russian subjects, who would resent liberties granted to the Poles and not to them. The belief that this would be done was the reason for the rejoicing of the Poles over the formation of the Congress Kingdom, small as it was. The disappointment of their hopes was the chief reason for the Revolution of 1830. As a result of the arrangements of the Congress of Vienna, the territories of the ancient Republic of Poland were in 1815 under five distinct administrations; namely, (1) Austrian Poland, (2) Prussian Poland, (3) the Lithuanian territories incorporated in the Russian Empire, (4) the autonomous Congress Kingdom, ruled by the Emperor as King, and (5) the Republic of Cracow.

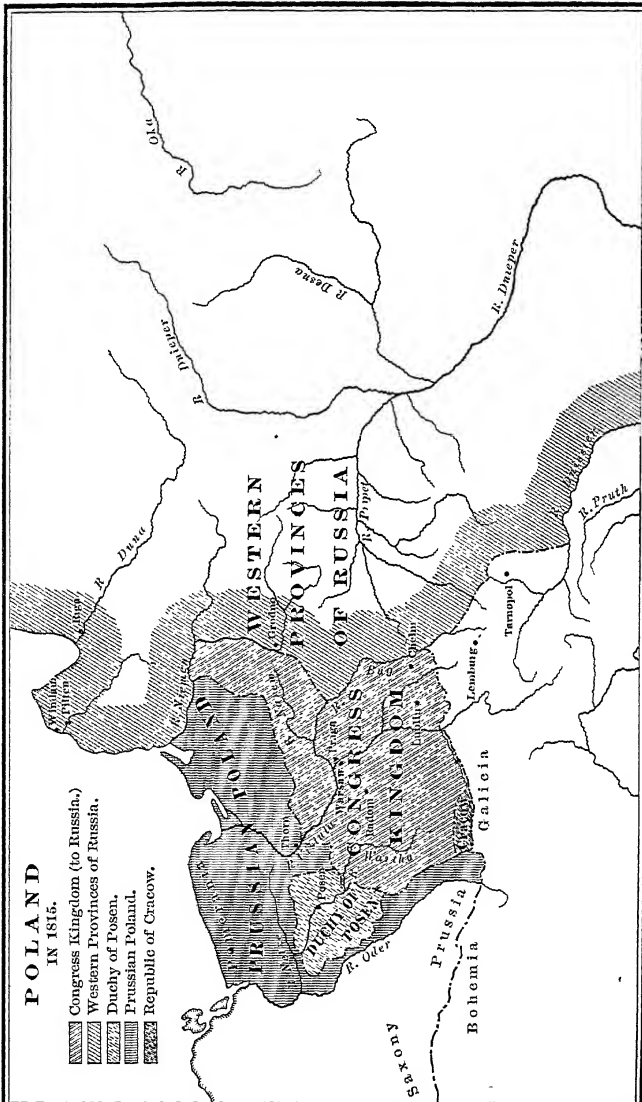
The Final Act of the Congress of Vienna stipulated that the Poles, in the territories ceded to Prussia and Austria, should receive "a representation and national institutions." It guaranteed also the freedom of trade, of navigation, and of intercommunication across the frontiers within the boundaries of the Poland of 1772.

These provisions show that the Congress of Vienna had in mind, not merely the division of Polish territory among the Powers, but made



## IN 1815.

 Congress Kingdom (to Russia.)  
 Western Provinces of Russia.  
 Duchy of Posen.  
 Prussian Poland.  
 Republic of Cracow.





an attempt to offer at least a partial solution of the Polish problem by removing some of the chief grievances of the Polish people.

The results of these arrangements were, however, far from satisfactory. It was in Russia, where the ruler had a real and personal interest in Polish freedom, that the hopes of the Poles were naturally centered. The Constitution granted by the Emperor was a good one. It provided a Parliament of two houses, to meet every two years; the lower House was elective, and the franchise was the most liberal in Europe; the executive was vested in a Polish Council of State, headed by a viceroy acting for the king; the ministers were responsible. Polish was to be the official language, and all government officials were to be Poles. Freedom of religion, freedom from arbitrary arrest, and liberty of the press were guaranteed. This Constitution seemed to promise the development of a real and healthy national life.

The great difficulty was that all Russia was opposed to it. The Emperor was perhaps the only man in the country thoroughly in favor of it. The Grand Duke Constantine, the Emperor's brother, in charge of the Polish army during the period of provisional government, simply ignored the Constitution altogether,

pursuing his own autocratic way as though it did not exist. The Russian Imperial Commissioner, Nicholas Novosiltsoff, appointed to watch over Russian interests, was also wholly opposed to the Constitution, and constantly usurped authority himself, as well as encouraged and incited the Grand Duke in his course. Novosiltsoff, indeed, was the evil genius of the Poles, hated by them as perhaps few men have been. Clever, astute, and thoroughly informed, he concealed under an outward profession of the most liberal opinions and enlightened aims the characteristics of the most arbitrary and evil of Russian bureaucrats. As one of the early friends of Alexander I, a confidant and, supposedly, a sharer of his liberal views, Novosiltsoff had great influence with him, and was probably one of those largely responsible for the fact that after 1818 the Emperor began gradually but surely to abandon his liberal ideas.

Though ideally interested in liberalism, Alexander was temperamentally an autocrat, and never really understood or liked constitutional government. He regarded parliamentary opposition to his wishes as ingratitude, and was profoundly displeased when government bills designed to destroy the liberty of the press and the responsibility of ministers were defeated.

He was also much concerned over the bad financial conditions of the Kingdom. There was a large and increasing deficit, at the same time that the taxes were levied with extreme vigor and were deeply resented by the people. Novosiltsoff was continually urging the financial situation as evidence of the incapacity of the Poles for self-government. On the other hand, the Poles saw and pointed out that it was the army which was eating up the income, and the Grand Duke Constantine was constantly increasing both the equipment and the size of the army without any regard to expense, and quite independently of the constitutional budget. Added to this was also the fact that the original army, before the Grand Duke's additions, had been rather larger than the Kingdom could well support, but had been accepted on the supposition that the Emperor was going very shortly to add the Western Provinces to the Kingdom.

In 1821 Prince Xavier Lubecki was appointed Finance Minister, and quite revolutionized the finances of the Kingdom, putting them in a very prosperous condition in a very short time. But in order to do this he had to use unconstitutional means. Lubecki was a Pole, a constitutionalist and a patriot, and regretted the

## 256 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

means he had to employ, but he thought he saw the very existence of the Kingdom threatened by her insolvency, and overrode the Constitution in order to save it.

The Polish people, however, were profoundly disillusioned by this disregard of the Constitution by both friend and foe, as well as by the Emperor's long delay in creating a Greater Poland. Many of them believed that he was going to do away with the Constitution altogether, and they began their traditional secret revolutionary agitation. A secret society, the National Patriotic Association, was formed in 1819 on the initiative of the Poles in the Prussian province of Posen, and soon spread throughout Greater Poland, using the Freemasons' lodges as centers. In 1822 Novosiltsoff ferreted out its existence, and got the leaders imprisoned or exiled, but it was soon reorganized in different form, and flourished, as the Grand Duke Constantine, who in his own autocratic and barbaric way loved the Poles (he gave up his claim to the Russian throne in order to marry in 1820 a Polish lady, Jeannette Grudzinska, afterwards Countess Lovicz), refused absolutely to believe in their treachery, and the Emperor accepted his brother's faith in this matter.

Alexander's death in December, 1825, at least put an end to all uncertainty as to Poland's future. The Emperor Nicholas I, who succeeded him, was reactionary and anti-Western in his whole policy. He disliked constitutions, was entirely unsympathetic with nationalist aspirations, and only wanted justification for his conscience to abolish the separate administration of the Kingdom altogether. The Poles realized this, and from the moment of his accession they waited only the favorable moment for a revolution. The success of the revolutions in France and Belgium gave them courage; they believed that France would help them, and were goaded to fury by the report that the Polish army was to be obliged to act with the Russians against Belgium and France. The result was that at the end of November, 1830, a military insurrection broke out, in which, to the surprise and grief of Constantine, practically all his beloved army turned against him. Hated by the Poles, and hated scarcely less by the Russians, who believed his blind faith in the Poles was responsible for the whole affair, the unhappy man succumbed without resistance or regret to the cholera in June, 1831. Meanwhile the Poles had their army (and thanks to Constantine it was a good

one) to use in the struggle against Russia. Their only hope lay in striking at once, striking hard, and winning thereby assistance from France, for only through outside aid was ultimate success against Russia possible.

But as always in Poland, divided counsels made united and prompt action impossible. There were two parties in Poland at this time. The "Reds," or "Patriots," members of the secret Patriotic Association mentioned above, were strongly democratic and radical in their ideas of government, as well as strongly nationalist. All the lesser nobles, or *szlachta*, as well as the townspeople, belonged to this party, and they commanded a majority in the Council of State. This majority had accepted the overthrow of the Constitution of 1815, had constituted themselves a provisional revolutionary government, and were in favor of fighting. They had with them the majority of the Diet, and probably of the country. The historian Lelewel and Count Wladislaus Ostrowski were the leaders of this party.

The "Whites," on the other hand, though as strongly nationalist as the Reds, were conservative and aristocratic in their ideas, and though they represented the minority, had yet among their number all the leading personalities, in-



cluding Prince Adam Czartoryski, the head of the Council, and General Joseph Chlopicki, the head of the army. This party wanted compromise with Russia, realizing the hopelessness of a struggle against her, on the one hand, and seeing no future for Poland except through the Russian connection. They overthrew the provisional government of the Reds, and set up General Chlopicki as Dictator, who at once opened negotiations with Russia for a compromise. As a matter of fact, however, no compromise was possible, since Whites as well as Reds stood firmly by their demands of complete amnesty, maintenance of the Constitution, and the reunion of Podolia, Volhynia, and the Ukraine with the Kingdom. And the Emperor on his side would accept nothing but unconditional surrender. Upon learning this, the Poles declared war in January, 1831. They were joined by the Poles in Russia's Western Provinces, and though they were no match for the might of Russia, yet their skill, bravery, and enthusiasm kept the Russians busy for eight months, and convinced the Emperor that the Poles were a dangerous people.

By September, 1831, the Kingdom was unconditionally in the Emperor's hands, and in February, 1832, he issued an "Organic Statute"

on the government of Poland, to replace the Constitution. By this, Poland was declared an integral part of the Russian Empire, and was to be governed by a Council of State appointed by the Emperor.

Thousands of Polish soldiers escaped to France, Prussia, and Austria, and became centers of agitation for Polish liberty. As a concession to France and England, whose governments were supporting the cause of the Poles very vigorously by all peaceful means, the Emperor allowed Poland to keep its separate administration, its own judiciary, its guaranty of freedom from arbitrary arrest, and a somewhat limited freedom of opinion and of religion, as well as its old system of local government.

The Emperor, however, managed to make all these concessions nugatory in fact by establishing at Petersburg the new Department of Affairs of the Czardom of Poland, with Paskievich as its head. The real government of Poland was in the hands of this department. Five of its members were Poles, Prince Lubecki among them, but its influential members were Russians, and hostile to Poland, — as, for example, Novosiltsoff, — and the Polish members were regarded as traitors by their countrymen.

In 1833 risings in various parts of Poland led

to the abandonment of all pretense of government by the Organic Statute, though it remained nominally in force until 1847, when it was abolished by imperial *ukase*.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE REVOLUTION OF 1863

SINCE 1831 the Congress Kingdom has been an integral part of the Russian Empire. Its territories form the ten governments of the Vistula, and are ruled, as are the rest of the Russian governments or provinces, by a governor appointed by the Emperor, and the policy of Russia toward them has depended, first, on the general policy of the ruling Emperor toward all his peoples, and secondly, on the degree of revolutionary activity going on, or known to be going on, in Poland.

Russian emperors in modern times have been of two general types — the followers of Peter the Great, who wished to westernize Russia, to bring her in contact with the life, thought, and institutions of western Europe, and to obliterate as far as possible the differences, social and economic as well as political, that have kept her since the thirteenth century a nation apart. The other party, the Old Russian Party, has taken the position that Russia is, by her geographical position and by her inherent characteristics, not a Western

but an Eastern Power; that she is essentially different from and in many ways superior to western Europe, and that her true lines of development lie in quite other directions. Russia should look within herself, and find there, in her own traditions and in her own characteristic institutions, the ideals and principles of her development. All else is imitation and superficial, and can never result in a wholesome national life. By the early nineteenth century the Old Russian idea had taken a slightly different form. The Old Russians had discovered that all the essentially Russian characteristics were Slav characteristics, and differentiated all Slavs equally with Russians from Western European and non-Slav peoples. The Old Russian idea then became the Slavophil or Pan-Slav idea — the preservation and development of a Slav civilization, which they conceived could practically be carried out only by bringing all the Slav peoples together in a strongly centralized, autocratic, Orthodox Empire, ruled by the Russian Emperor. A Slavophil became thus practically a Russophil policy.

Liberals of the type of the Emperor Alexander I, who had believed in decentralization, and whose idea of the Russian Empire

was a federation of autonomous states organized along national lines, could encourage nationalist aspirations in Poland with impunity. But the Emperor Nicholas I was a Slavophil, and between 1830 and 1840 the greater number of Russian intellectuals sympathized with this view. The Slavophiles could welcome the Poles to a Pan-Slav state only after they had renounced their nationalism, and regarded the Polish nationalist Revolution of 1831 as treachery to the Pan-Slav cause.

By 1840, however, the rigidly repressive government of the Emperor Nicholas had alienated every type of liberal from his government, and had produced a new type of Pan-Slavist, who saw that the Pan-Slav ideal was not at all incompatible in its essentials with liberty and national autonomy, and from this time on, the Russian liberals were generally sympathetic and desirous of friendship with Poland.

Under the Emperor Nicholas, however, there was no opportunity to carry out these friendly ideas. He pursued undeviatingly and unflinchingly the impossible task of destroying the very memory of Poland and of making good Russians out of the Poles. He closed the great Polish universities of Wilna and Warsaw, so

that Poles would be obliged to send their sons to Russian institutions, where the Polish language was never heard, the study of Polish history was forbidden, and Polish youth were trained for the Russian service. The youth of the lower classes were drafted into the Russian army in such numbers that Poland was shorn of young men. In trade and commerce, also, the attempt was made thoroughly to Russianize the country; the prohibitive Russian tariff practically closed all Poland's old markets to her, and contact with foreigners was discouraged by a passport system which allowed practically no one to leave the country. The press was absolutely under government supervision, and a secret police filled the prisons with all who showed any opposition to the system. All sorts of restrictions were put upon visitors to Poland, making it difficult and uncomfortable for them to stay there. In short, Poland was made to feel almost every hour of every day the grinding tyranny of Russian rule.

But it was all in vain. The heavier the oppression and the greater the indignities, the hotter burned the flame of Polish patriotism. From the very moment the Revolution of 1830 was over, the Poles began preparing by secret underground intrigues for a new revolution.

## 266 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

These intrigues were carried on, not only in the Kingdom but also in Posen, and especially in the Western Provinces, where the landed proprietors, forming only about ten per cent of the population, were Polish, and the rest of the population Russians, Letts, or Jews. These landed proprietors made it advantageous for their peasants to learn the Polish language, taught them Polish history, influenced them against Russia, and finally taught them to regard themselves as Poles, and in many cases to accept the Roman Catholic religion of Poland. The Polish clergy were very active in both political and religious propaganda, with the result that in 1855, when the Emperor Nicholas died, the Western Provinces were far more Polish than they had been in 1830.

The death of the Emperor Nicholas was a great relief to all his oppressed subjects, especially to the Poles. His successor, the Emperor Alexander II, was a liberal, and introduced liberal methods at once into the government of all parts of his empire. He visited Poland shortly after his accession, and on this occasion took the first steps toward establishing cordial relations between himself and his Polish subjects. The suspension of recruiting, the pardon of prisoners held for political offenses,



an amnesty granted, with very few exceptions, to all political exiles, by which all emigrant Poles of the Western Provinces as well as of the Kingdom were allowed to return and were restored to their civil rights, and the restoration of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Church, were the reforms that brought the greatest relief to the Poles. Fully as important, however, was the appointment of a commission to make recommendations as to the best way of dealing with the question of the peasants and the land, and the formation with government permission, by certain landed proprietors, of an Agricultural Society for the Kingdom.

The relaxation of the oppressive tariff and passport systems opened the way for a revival of trade and industry, which was almost immediately taken advantage of, and in a very short time poverty and despair were giving way to prosperity and hope.

Although the Emperor had explicitly said that "for the good of Poland and for the good of the Poles themselves, it is necessary that your country should remain ever united to that of the great family of the Emperor of Russia," and although he had made no changes in government looking at all definitely toward autonomy, yet many thoughtful and intelligent men

believed that, by the development of her economic resources and by the education of her people, Poland in a few years might become so powerful and so important to Russia that political concessions might be won from the Emperor, of far more permanence and value than could be expected from a revolution.

Unfortunately they formed but a small minority in the Kingdom. The majority were still in favor of a revolution for independence, but were divided, as in 1830, as to the methods of revolution and the character of the constitution which was to follow success.

In 1860 as in 1830, the Whites desired more careful preparation and the assurance of European assistance before they revolted, and favored an aristocratic constitution, with powers practically confined to the great landed proprietors, while the Reds stood for immediate action and an extremely democratic form of government. The revolutionary element in each group was greatly strengthened by the political exiles who flocked back to Warsaw as a result of the amnesty. The majority of these exiles were Whites, though some of them, the younger men chiefly, by contact in Paris or other places of their exile with the great democratic movement going on all over Europe, had

become democratic, and were violently opposed to revolution under aristocratic leadership. With Louis Mieroslawski at their head they formed out of the various democratic elements in the Kingdom a strong party, which at once began a campaign of "unarmed agitation," whose object was to arouse popular feeling against the Russians by constant appeals to the Polish national spirit, and thus prepare for open, united revolution. For this purpose they celebrated with great ostentation the anniversaries of Polish national heroes, especially those most obviously connected with complete Polish independence. The Polish national hymn was constantly sung in the churches; Russians were ostracized socially, and attempts were constantly made to put Russian officials in the wrong, to goad them to violence, and then point to it as characteristic Russian conduct.

Of this campaign of intrigue and underground revolutionary activity the Agricultural Society soon became the center. Formed under the special sanction of the Emperor himself, for the purpose of enlisting the best talent of the country in the very vital task of improving the agricultural conditions in the Kingdom, counting among its members the most illustrious and most enlightened men in the country, it was the

one place where all parties came together in a common interest, and the Party of Action resolved to use it for its own ends.

The majority of the original three or four hundred members were conservatives, most of them Whites, but many of them, like the President, Count Andrew Zamoyski, were opposed to political opposition to Russia, and relied on economic and social progress to regenerate their country, and few of them, probably, favored the transformation of their society into a political organ. In spite of this fact, however, the Society by 1861 had a membership of four thousand drawn from Galicia, Posen, and the Western Provinces as well as from the Kingdom and was so identified with disaffection that the Government at Petersburg ordered its dissolution. Just before this took place, however, the Society, knowing that its days were numbered, resolved to mark its passing by issuing a plan for the settlement of the land question extremely liberal to the peasants. As has been shown in previous chapters, the condition of the peasants and their relations with the landed proprietors was one of the great evils in Old Poland, and conditions had altered little by 1860.

Napoleon, by the law of 1807, had indeed

made the serfs personally free, but they had received no land along with their freedom, and were therefore still in an economic bondage to their old masters, in some respects worse than the old slavery. The Polish peasant, therefore, had no love for his proprietor, and no interest in joining a revolution to give him more power. On the contrary, he saw in Russian rule his sole ray of hope. Alexander II had already freed the Russian serfs, and his Government was at that very moment at work on a similar plan for Poland — which the peasants knew full well. Yet the fact remained that the success of the projected revolution depended upon peasant support, and the great question for the upper class was how to get it. They knew it could be won only through concessions regarding the land, and they resolved to offer through the Agricultural Society a plan for peasant ownership, far more liberal than anything to be expected from the Russian Government, and to offer it first. In a word, they meant to outbid the Government for peasant allegiance.

The plan did not succeed. The peasants understood the motives of the "reformers," distrusted their good faith, and remained loyal to the Russian Government.

The policy of the Emperor Alexander toward

the Poles during these years was lenient and considerate in the extreme. He continued his policy of gradually liberalizing the Polish Government, in spite of the hostile attitude shown in the unarmed agitation. In March of 1861 the Council of State for Poland, abolished by the Emperor Nicholas in 1841, was reëstablished; all the remnants of military rule in Poland were abolished, and the whole country came under civil administration. The most important branches of the Polish administration were made quite distinct from the Russian, — as for instance, the Post-Office, Public Works, and Highways, — and with very few exceptions all civil officials were Poles. By 1863 there were scarcely a dozen Russians in official positions in the whole Kingdom. Local self-government also was introduced, and a national system of education started, the development of which, together with all educational matters, was put into the hands of the revived Polish Commission on Education and Religion, abolished in 1839. These concessions were not only very important in themselves, but full of hope for the future, as showing the direction in which the Emperor's policy was moving.

Perhaps it was natural, however, that these measures should seem of little importance to

the majority of Poles. A profound hatred and distrust of Russia, bred of the long and bitter tyranny of Nicholas I, made it difficult for them to see anything but weakness and self-interest in Russian reforms. The experience of the Congress Kingdom had convinced them that a Russian might grant, but would never observe, a constitution, and that what one emperor gave the next would take away. But even had they been able to get more or less liberal institutions from Russia, and some reasonable guaranty of their permanence, it would not have satisfied them. They wanted nothing less than complete independence from a detested foreign government, and the reunion of all the territories of their ancient state.

Under such conditions a revolt against Russia was inevitable sooner or later, as even the Poles most opposed to such a revolt recognized. All they could hope to do was to put it off until such time as the people were better prepared for it materially, and more united in their ideas as to what should follow it.

The Marquis Wielopolski was one of those who held the view noted above, and as Chief Minister of the Grand Duke Constantine, who was made Governor of Poland in 1862, had the opportunity to be of great service to his

country, and save her from a fatal mistake, by uniting all the moderates in a party of opposition to immediate revolution. Unfortunately, however, he was not only unable but unwilling to form a party or to coöperate with any one. Haughty and self-sufficient, he stood alone, disliked and distrusted by all. Keenly intelligent as well as deeply patriotic, he had come to believe that an independent Poland was an impossibility, and he saw in union with Russia, the other great Slav state of the North, her best chance of strength and freedom in the future. But he was no statesman; he understood ideas better than men. He failed to see that his policy needed friends and could not succeed by being forced upon the Poles arbitrarily; and in 1863, in attempting to prevent immediate revolution, he himself committed the very act which precipitated it.

The law in force in Poland from 1815 to 1859 put the selection of military recruits in the hands of the police, with the result that recruiting had been the method by which the Government got rid of politically inconvenient subjects. In 1859 a new law had been passed, abolishing this method of choice and substituting the fairer and more usual choice by lot. Since the passage of the law, however, no conscrip-



tion had been necessary, and the new law had thus never been used. In 1862 the army needed renewal, and a conscription was ordered. The Marquis Wielpolski resolved to ignore the new law, and use the old system which, by drafting into the Russian army all the youth of the Revolutionary party, would destroy its power. To prevent agitation the lists were kept secret, and the conscripts were seized by the police at dead of night, and hurried away to the frontiers without warning. Three days later the whole country was in revolution.

But the Poles had no independent organization as in 1830, no army, and no money. They could carry on guerrilla warfare only, and were bound in time to be crushed by Russia's superior numbers and organization. Their early successes were due to the fact that Russia had not expected the revolt — Wielpolski had assured the Emperor that nothing would happen — and the Russian troops were scattered. Their only real hope was in outside aid, which did not come. France and England protested, indeed, but were unwilling actively to intervene. Russia, seeing that they did not mean to act, and supported by Prussia, who regarded the crushing of the Poles as a matter of vital importance to her, put down the rebellion with a strong

hand. In this policy the Emperor had the support of a unanimous public opinion, Russians of all parties being deeply stirred by events in Poland, especially by the rejection on the part of the Revolutionary Central Committee of the Emperor's offer of amnesty (March 31, 1863), when the Polish cause was clearly hopeless, and by a manifesto from this same Revolutionary Government, in which they declared that they would be satisfied with nothing less than the conquest of the Western Provinces from Russia and the cession to them of Galicia and Posen by Austria and Prussia.

There is no doubt at all that the Revolution of 1863 was a colossal mistake, and that its failure was followed by the most unfortunate consequences for the Poles. But deplorable as failure was, success might have been more deplorable still. Nothing but anarchy could have resulted from the success of a people fundamentally divided. Reds and Whites were hopelessly at odds in their ideas of a government for Poland. The Reds would never have accepted a Czartoryski, for example, as king, while the magnates and great proprietors would never have consented to be governed by a constitution dictated by the Reds and based on democratic principles; and the peasants held

aloof from both parties, knowing the democrats too little to trust them, and the nobles far too well.

Meanwhile in Austrian and Prussian Poland and the little Republic of Cracow, conditions since 1815 had been almost equally discouraging. The provisions of the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna remained practically a dead letter. The Powers were not interested in carrying them out, and the Poles were so divided that they were nowhere strong enough to make effective protest.

The Republic of Cracow received, indeed, a constitution, guaranteed by Austria, Russia, and Prussia, according to which the government was carried on by a Senate of twelve members, and a Representative Assembly, meeting each year to consider legislation. Three permanent Residents, representing the three guaranteeing Powers, had "supervision" over the Government. These Residents became very soon the real governing power, and when, after 1835, Cracow became the center of secret societies and revolutionary agitation, the Residents, by mutual agreement, suspended the Constitution and governed directly until 1846. In that year, after an unsuccessful attempt at independence, Cracow was annexed to Austria.

## 278 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

In the Grand Duchy of Posen, between 1815 and 1830, a sincere attempt was made to conciliate the Poles. The Grand Duchy was, indeed, incorporated in the Kingdom of Prussia, but the Polish nationality and the Polish language were given official recognition, and the administrative officials were either Poles or were chosen for their Polish sympathies. A Diet was established in 1822, with the privilege of laying grievances before the king. From the economic point of view the administration between 1815 and 1840 resulted in nothing but good. The serfs were freed and made into peasant proprietors; roads were built, better methods of agriculture encouraged, industries introduced, and all with true Prussian thoroughness and efficiency. The peasants, among whom there was almost no Polish national feeling, accepted these reforms gladly, and were fairly contented with their Prussian rulers; but the Polish nobles and the Roman Catholic clergy were irreconcilable from the first. They were in constant and close communication with the revolutionists in Austrian and Russian Poland, and twelve thousand of them crossed the border into the Congress Kingdom and took part in the Revolution of 1830. It was this fact that decided the Prussian Government to

change its policy to one of severe repression and Germanization, which continued for ten years. Under Frederick William IV, who came to the throne in 1840, it was somewhat relaxed, with the result that political agitation at once began, and prepared the country to take part in the Revolution of 1845. In that year, under the leadership of Mieroslawski, the head of the Polish revolutionaries in Paris, a National Government was set up in Cracow, which called upon all Poles everywhere to rise. The arrest and imprisonment of Mieroslawski in Posen prevented the participation of the Grand Duchy in the rising, and kept the country quiet until 1848. That year was marked by successful popular risings all over Europe.

In Berlin the liberal populace rose, demanding the constitution promised them in 1815, but never granted. The King, alarmed at the prospect of civil war, and believing apparently that the insurgents were far stronger than they really were, granted everything asked of him, including a general amnesty for all political prisoners.

In Posen a national committee, headed by Mieroslawski, who was released from prison by the amnesty, set up a Polish provisional government for the Grand Duchy, and demanded

from the King an autonomous administration. Here also the King yielded, but the Prussian troops in Posen and the German inhabitants refused to accept the King's concessions, and in an orgy of cruelty that offended even the German officials, they quickly reduced the country to submission.

From 1848 to 1863 the Government in Posen was conservative and arbitrary, but not particularly severe. The sympathies of the Prussian liberals were with the Poles, and the Poles were represented in the Prussian parliament, where they aired their grievances and through publicity maintained a measure of good government for their country. The revolutionary propaganda was constantly carried on in Posen as in the Congress Kingdom, and along very much the same lines. There was constant communication between the revolutionists of both countries, and Posen made all her preparations to take part in the Revolution of 1863. But Bismarck, now at the head of the Prussian Government, had no intention of allowing this to take place, and a wall of troops along the frontier kept Posen out of it, while Russia and Prussia reduced the Congress Kingdom to submission.

In Galicia, between 1816 and 1860, conditions

were little better. While there is no such thing as an Austrian nation or race, — the Austrian state being made up of many nationalities, the majority of them Slav, and the Germans forming a minority, and a lessening minority, of the population, — yet the dynasty is German, and until 1866 the German minority was the dominating influence. The Austrian ruler also was head of the Germanic Confederation, and as such was the official leader of Germany. Austria, therefore, regarded herself as a German state, and carried on a policy of Germanization toward the Poles that, until 1848 certainly, was quite as rigorous as that of Prussia.

The Polish rising of 1846 was suppressed with special severity in Galicia, the Austrian Government inciting the Ruthenian serfs to rise against their Polish landlords, and race-war with all its horrors was thus made the weapon with which Polish nationalism was beaten. In 1848 Austria freed the serfs, and gave them their land free of all redemption dues, a reform which they regarded as a reward for their services in 1846, and which resulted in binding them closely to Austria.

After 1848 Prussia became Austria's serious rival for German leadership, and by 1860 the conflict which was to decide between them was

imminent. Austria was forced to recognize the possibility of her defeat in this struggle, and to meet the new situation she inaugurated a new policy in her empire; namely, the neutralization of German influence by the development of the Slavs. Germanization stopped, and each Slav nation was allowed a certain measure of self-government, and was left free to develop along its own lines, within the limits of imperial unity.

As trouble with Russia over the Balkan situation loomed large on the Austrian horizon, the support of the Poles of Galicia was of special importance, and accordingly a constitution was granted to the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria in February, 1861, which contained more liberal concessions than were granted to any other people.

With the tacit consent of the Austrian Government, Galicia became the headquarters of the Polish revolt against Russia in 1863. In 1864 the Revolutionary National Government at Warsaw tried, most foolishly and with total misunderstanding of the situation, to stir up a revolt in Galicia. As a result, the Constitution was withdrawn for a year, and the country put under martial law, with its attendant severities; but even so, Galicia suffered far less than



the other Polish territories from the revolution, and was in a much better position, both economically and as regards its political relations, than either of the others, when peace was restored.

## CHAPTER IX

### POLAND SINCE 1863

#### I. PRUSSIAN POLAND

FOR eight hundred years the Germans have been fighting the Slavs on their eastern border and colonizing their conquered lands; the Mark of Brandenburg came into existence for this purpose, the Knights of the Sword and the Teutonic Order carried on the struggle for nearly five hundred years, and when the Brandenburg Hohenzollerns succeeded to the Duchy of Prussia they simply inherited the age-old task of maintaining and extending German influence on the Vistula. The method of carrying out this task has been the same throughout the centuries. The "peaceful penetration" of German traders and of subsidized German settlers has prepared the way for conquest and after conquest the steady pressure of a German administration and continued colonization have made the Slav territories one after another completely German. The Kingdom of Prussia, which grew out of the union of the Duchy with the Brandenburg Electorate, became great and powerful by the Prussianization of conquered

peoples, chiefly Slavs, and the partitions of Poland formed only one step, though it was a long step, in this process. Expansion at the expense of the Slavs is thus a basal fact in Prussian history, the fact to which she owes her greatness and, hence, her leadership in modern Germany. Under Prussian leadership this policy of "Drang nach Östen" has become an imperial policy and one with which the future as well as the past existence of the Empire is very closely bound up.

It was a disappointment to Prussia that the Warsaw region, the region of the Middle Vistula, which was hers by the partition of 1795, but was lost during the Napoleonic wars, was not restored to her in 1815. Her control of this part of the great Polish waterway would not only be an important economic advantage, but would give her a strategic frontier. In Russian hands this region forms a great salient into Prussian territory. An autonomous Poland under Russian rule would carry forces friendly to Russia into the heart of Germany, and would inevitably in time result in the amalgamation of much if not all of Prussian Poland with this autonomous state. Friendship between Russia and Poland would thus be fatal to German policy, and for this reason the Prussian Gov-

ernment has been the steady and consistent opponent of Polish freedom, both in Russia and at home. In Russia she has used all her diplomatic skill to keep up bad feeling between Russians and Poles, and at home she has adopted a policy of ruthless and systematic Germanization. The necessity for this policy is found in the fact that the Germans as a race are not very tenacious of their nationalism. They succumb rather easily to alien civilizations with which they come in contact and among the Poles were gradually becoming Polonized; or if not they were boycotted and ostracized by their Polish neighbors until they were forced to leave, and were replaced by Poles. The result of this process was that the Poles were gradually bringing under Polish influence, not only the land of their old Kingdom, but also regions hitherto wholly German, and the purpose of the Government was to counteract this development and restore German control.

For the first few years after 1863 the absorption of Prussia in the events leading to empire in 1870 necessitated leaving the Poles much to themselves, but shortly after 1871 the Polish policy began to stiffen under Bismarck, who believed that Polish nationalism was "success-

fully undermining the foundations of the Prussian state." The use of the Polish language was forbidden; towns and streets received German names; letters and telegrams, addressed in Polish to Polish places, were not delivered; very few Poles were retained in public office, and those few were obliged to Germanize their names; officers and employés of the state were forbidden to live in houses owned by Poles, and in the schools even religion was taught in the German language.

But though it was enforced with much rigor for fifteen years, this policy did not achieve its purpose. The great economic and especially the great industrial forces which had transformed Russian Poland <sup>1</sup> had also been at work here, but the transformation had been more rapid as a result of effective and intelligent government assistance. Here as there by 1885 a new Polish middle class and an industrial proletariat had come into existence and had become enthusiastic supporters of Polish nationalism, which, thus reinforced, had become a far more serious danger than the old nationalism of the Polish nobility. Everywhere the Germans continued to lose to the increasing numbers, wealth, and intelligence of the Poles.

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 23, 24.

The best evidence of this is that in 1885 and 1886 it was thought necessary to introduce more drastic measures.

In 1885 thirty thousand Slav immigrants were expelled from the Polish provinces, and in 1886 the famous Colonization Commission (*Anseidelungs Kommission*) was founded. The Commission bought out, with funds supplied by the Government, the Polish nobles who were willing to sell their land, and the land thus acquired was sold only to Germans, and only on condition that it was not to be resold to Poles. At first the Poles were very ready to sell, but after they saw the results and realized the purpose of the law, they not only kept what land they had, but formed societies to buy up all the land on the market and sell it to Poles, and thus prevent the Commission from getting hold of it. Poles also, who sold to the Commission, were regarded as traitors to their nation, with the result that the Commission found it difficult to get land while competition forced the price up to a prohibitive figure.

The failure of its policy only drove the Government to still more drastic methods. In 1904 a law was passed forbidding the erection of buildings in Poland without the permission of the Commission. Only when the Polish pro-

prietor agreed to dispose of his land to Germans was permission to build given him, with the result that the Poles could rarely sell their land to Poles, as few people want to buy land on which they cannot build. The final step in this process was taken when in 1908 the Polish Expropriation or Dispossession Act was passed, for the compulsory purchase of what land the Commission wanted.

And how did the Poles meet this last and most hostile of all attacks on their national existence? They simply settled on the nearest Polish estate, or they went to the cities, where they swelled the numbers of that great industrial class which was steadily forcing the Germans out of all the small business positions. In both cases they have become more ardently anti-Prussian than ever. The boycott, complete separation, and the ostracism of the Germans and of all things German have been their only means of opposition; but their use, pursued relentlessly and unitedly by the Poles, though resulting in persecution, has united all classes as they were never united before and has also beaten the Germans. Economically the Commission has improved the country enormously. It has broken up large estates, reclaimed waste land, built model villages, and

established a prosperous German peasantry which presents a sharp contrast to the estates of the poor Polish peasant, with no government behind him. But these poor Polish peasants are holding their own, and learning all the time from their German enemies. Not only are they more prolific than the Germans, but they never lose their nationality; whereas, as has been said above, the German is rather easily denationalized. In spite of the efforts of the Government to keep them apart, he often marries a Polish wife and comes under the powerful influence of the Catholic priesthood. If he does not completely succumb to the influences surrounding him, at any rate his children do. They are Catholics and Poles from birth. In self-defense they Polonize their name, and make a point of forgetting that they have any German blood.

Prince von Bülow, Imperial Chancellor from 1900 to 1908, in his recent book <sup>1</sup> claims that the Government's policy is only incidentally and negatively anti-Polish. "The aim of Prussian policy in the Eastern Marches has always been to reconcile subjects of Polish nationality to the Prussian state and the German nation. Nothing is further from the aims of our policy . . . than a fight against the Poles; its object is

<sup>1</sup> Prince Bernhard von Bülow, *Imperial Germany*, p. 306.



to protect, maintain, and strengthen the German nationality among the Poles. Consequently it is a fight for German nationalism." Whatever the motive, the result is pretty clearly a war of extermination, as the Prince admits when he says: "In the struggle between nationalities one nation is the hammer and the other the anvil. One is the victor and the other the vanquished." He admits also that up to date (1914) the policy has failed, but he believes that steady pressure unflinchingly applied for many years will ultimately attain their end.

And after ultimate success what? The Poles in Posen as well as in the Kingdom have long believed that the object of Germany's "protectorate" in Turkey and her close and dominating alliance with Austria is expansion into the east of Europe, where, in the empires of Turkey and Russia, vast stretches of undeveloped country, sparsely populated by backward peoples, offer a great field for economic enterprise as well as for the spread of that German "culture" which Germany regards it as her mission to carry to the uttermost parts of the earth. Dmowski states the situation very well when he says, "Just as it was the fall of Poland that gave Prussia special importance in Europe and made possible her leadership in

modern Germany, so the renaissance of Poland as a political factor would mean an end to the domination of Prussia in the German Empire."<sup>1</sup> Prussia understands this perfectly and it makes any compromise between herself and her Poles impossible.

The significance of the struggle is also perfectly understood by the Poles. They are the outposts, planted right in the enemy's country, of the great army of all Slavdom lined up to battle for its existence against the advancing might of Germanism. But by the very fact of their position they can only retard, not definitely check, the German advance. That must be the task of the lines farther back in Russian Poland, where the real strength of the Slav cause, if strength it has, must be found.

## 2. RUSSIAN POLAND

Immediately the Revolution of 1863 was crushed, the Russian Government put into operation in Poland the plan of agrarian reform which it had been about to introduce when the revolution broke out. The new law gave the peasants entire personal freedom, nearly half of the arable land of the nobility in freehold, and the right to continue to use the forests and the

<sup>1</sup> Ramon Dmowski, *La Question Polonaise*.

pastures of their former masters; on the other hand, they were expressly freed from any and all obligation to cultivate the lands remaining in the possession of the nobility. The punishment of the nobility for rebellion was one purpose of the new law, but its chief object was to perpetuate the old antagonism between nobles and peasants (whom the Russians feared common misfortune might bring together), and attach the peasants permanently to Russia.

A new system of local administration introduced at the same time put the management of all village affairs into the hands of a village assembly composed exclusively of peasants, even the *szlachta*, many of whom were economically of the peasant class, being excluded together with the magnates and the clergy. In the district, which was composed of a group of villages, the governing body was an elected council on which all landowners were represented. Here the peasants sat side by side and shared power with their former owners. The object of these arrangements was to keep the peasant independent and protect him from the strongly anti-Russian influence of the Polish nobility and the Roman Catholic priesthood.

But the Polish peasant was not able to use the independence thus offered him. Accustomed to

being led, and deprived of his traditional leaders, the nobles and the clergy, he turned almost inevitably to the representatives of the central government in his district, and very soon, in spite of a law expressly forbidding it, these representatives were in full control of the peasant communes or villages, and with the tacit consent of the central authorities were carrying out a drastic and oppressive policy of Russification.

The Polish revolution had marked a crisis in the policy of the Emperor Alexander II. He had been for some time under strong reactionary influences, and, discouraged by the failure of many of his liberal plans, he was, even before 1863, quite undecided about carrying them further. The revolution precipitated his decision and a reactionary policy slowly but surely made itself felt throughout his Empire. In Poland it meant that the policy of Russification proceeded apace. The use of the Polish language in any public place was absolutely forbidden; in business, church, and school only Russian was permitted; newspapers could be printed, religious instruction could be given, only in Russian; and only those persons especially authorized by the Russian central authorities could teach in the schools.

Alexander II was assassinated in 1881, and his son Alexander III who succeeded him was a far more throughgoing reactionary than his father. He was in fact a Slavophil of the old extreme Russophil type. His ideal was the reduction of every one in the Empire to one pattern, Russian in nationality, Orthodox in religion, and in politics wholly and humbly submissive and obedient to an autocratic emperor. The alien and the Orthodox were especially the objects of his severity, and in Poland the church and the school were made the instruments of a Russifying policy so persistent, so unbending, and so ruthless that it defeated its own ends. On the surface the policy was a success, but underneath was an intense though silent hatred of Russia and all her works, which was easily made the basis for a Polish national revival. The sympathies of intelligent Russians were wholly with the Poles during this period; the better class of Russian bureaucrat refused to serve in Poland, and the governors-general themselves saw the evil and folly of such extreme measures and advised a milder policy, but without avail. Contrary to liberal hopes the accession of Nicholas II in 1894 made no change in policy. It was not until the Revolution of 1904, which followed the defeats of Russia in

the Japanese war, wrung reluctant concessions everywhere from a powerless Government that the situation in Poland improved.

In the Western Provinces, where only the upper class and a small proportion of the peasants were Polish and the mass of the population either Lithuanian, White Russian, or Little Russian, the attempt was made, not only to stamp out all traces of revolution, but to stamp out the Polish people themselves. Whole Polish villages were burned and the inhabitants sent to Siberia; lands and fortunes of Polish nobles were confiscated, Catholic churches were closed, as were also all Polish theaters, and the Polish language, either written or spoken, was forbidden in all public places. With the object also of replacing Poles by Russians as rapidly as possible the Government in 1865 limited very strictly the amount of land that could be purchased in this region by persons of Polish origin. The local authorities in carrying out the law made religion the test of nationality, and Catholic peasants, whatever their parentage, found it extremely difficult, when it was not impossible, to get the land they needed and were financially well able to buy.

As the Western Provinces were fundamentally Russian and had been merely superficially

Polonized during the few centuries of Polish rule, and particularly as many of the inhabitants were Orthodox in religion, the Russification policy was largely successful in this region. The task was more difficult where the people were Lithuanian by race and Catholic by religion, or where, as in certain places, Poles formed the majority of the population. But even there, at least superficially, the policy succeeded, and no one passing through the country would have thought of its being Polish.

The Little Russians of the southeast were most of them Uniates, that is, Catholic in creed and government, but Orthodox in rite. The Government of Nicholas I abolished the Uniate Church in the Western Provinces and forced the Uniates of Lithuania and the Ukraine into the Orthodox Church. Persecution of the most cruel and persistent sort, however, failed to "convert" many, who remained secretly Catholic and became more strongly Polish than ever. In classifying individuals any one whose ancestors had been Uniate was classed by the Russian Government as Orthodox, even though the family had since become entirely Roman Catholic. Such persons were counted among those "converted" to Orthodoxy!

But in spite of repression and persecution a new and better Poland came into existence in the fifty years following the Revolution of 1863. Such progress was made in economic and social directions that the old Poland of 1863, then as in 1772 a backward, undeveloped country of nobles, priests, and serfs, gave place to a thickly populated, industrially prosperous, thoroughly modern and democratic country. The land legislation of 1864, which broke up the great estates, was the beginning of peasant prosperity, and the measures of Alexander III, who did much in all parts of his Empire to encourage and make possible progress in agriculture and industry, helped them further. The peasants made money, saved it, and were able to buy more land even at the high prices at which the nobles held it, so that when the present war broke out in 1914 considerably more than half the land was held by small peasant or *szlachta* proprietors. The population of the Kingdom more than doubled between 1863 and 1914 and a large proportion of the increase went to the towns, where it formed, with the Jews, a great industrial proletariat. Young Poles of the upper class also, barred from public life after 1863, turned to business with all their energies, and have played a lead-



ing part in the great commercial and industrial development that has gone on all over the Russian Empire during the last half-century. There was thus formed in Poland a native middle class, prosperous, intelligent, and progressive, destined to be a factor of enormous importance in the Poland of the future.

These two classes feel very differently about Russia from the older generation of Poles, on account of the fact that industrial Poland finds her chief market in Russia and is therefore economically dependent upon her. The industrial classes in Poland have therefore long since ceased to favor an independent Polish state, as independence would inevitably mean a hostile high tariff in Russian markets which would be their ruin.

There are other reasons, also, why the old ideal of their fathers, of an independent Polish state as the only adequate expression of Polish nationalism, has failed to commend itself to great numbers of modern Poles. First of all is its utter impracticability. The Poles of 1830 and 1863 were theorists and dreamers. Divided, undisciplined, and unprepared, they flung their feeble armies against the might of Russia with sublime patriotism and self-sacrifice, it is true, but with a blind disregard

## 300 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

of facts and possibilities. The Poles of the twentieth century are modern business men accustomed to direct dealing with hard facts and priding themselves on clear thinking. They have come to see that not only is revolution against Russia practically impossible, but that it is also inadvisable. They are no less patriotic than their fathers, and no less tenacious of their nationalism, but they recognize that under twentieth-century conditions the only way to preserve their nationalism is to "rest it against the great Slav Empire of Russia"; in other words, to create a free, autonomous Poland *within* the Russian Empire and supported by Russian friendship.

This idea is not a new one in Poland. As has been shown in previous chapters there has been ever since 1815 a small group of practical politicians whose idea was to coöperate with Russia as the only possible way of securing that minimum of local autonomy essential to any national development. Francis Lubecki and the Marquis Wielpolski were notable representatives of this type of thought, but like others of the same type they were always unpopular, partly, perhaps, because in a nation of theorists and dreamers they were hard-headed workers for practical results, and were willing

to use whatever means came to hand to obtain their ends; partly also because they were aristocrats and as such not trusted by the masses of the people. After 1863 this group, under the name of the Party of Conciliation, made attempts in all three divisions of Poland to carry out its policy, but without any success except in Galicia where the circumstances were particularly favorable to it. In Russian Poland it was not until new leaders with thoroughly democratic ideals had taken up the policy, and until a radical change in the European situation of both Russia and Poland had taken place, that the thought of the country turned in this direction. In 1902 the National Democratic Polish Party, having fought both Socialists and Conciliators and spent nearly twenty years in educational work, openly proclaimed that the fundamental idea of the Conciliators, the autonomy of Poland based on Russian friendship, was the goal for which it was working. To understand this change some knowledge of the intellectual history of these years is necessary.

The new generation growing up after 1863 was dominated by the resolve to know the facts about themselves and their past. They studied and analyzed the history of the old Poland

which their fathers had glorified and idealized, and they found, in her own institutions and traditions, the cause of that bitter class-hatred and disunion which had caused her fall. They saw that it was serfdom, Jesuit intolerance, and aristocratic privilege that had ruined Poland, and they set themselves the task of building up a new, united Poland on the solid foundations of civil equality, free thought, and democratic principles of government. In 1886 the Polish League (known after 1895 as the National League) was formed to teach this new democratic nationalism to the peasants, since the first and most necessary part of the new task was to win over the peasants whom the habits of centuries of serfdom had kept entirely aloof from public life. By teaching them their own history and literature the League tried to awaken their national feeling, to make them realize that they too were Poles, that Poland's interests were their interests, and thus make them intelligent and patriotic supporters of the new nationalism. From 1886 to 1896 the League worked, from necessity, as a secret society and under many difficulties, but it had the support and coöperation of many of the country nobility and the policy of the Russian Government had predisposed the peasants to

any anti-Russian propaganda. By 1897 it was so well supported that it abandoned its secrecy and came out publicly as the National Democratic Polish Party, under the leadership of M. Ramon Dmowski, who almost since its foundation had directed its work.

From 1897 to 1904 the party waged an un-resting campaign against the repressive policy of the Government. The peasant communes were the centers, the peasants the most active supporters of the party, and during these years it became abundantly clear that the age-old gulf between nobles and peasants was being bridged. By the end of 1903 the party had in its ranks most of the gentry and middle class, practically all the peasants, and a large section of the working men, and when in the elections to the first Russian Duma the party captured all the seats assigned to both the Kingdom and the Annexed Provinces, it could justly claim to represent the views of the majority of Poles.

During these critical years of Poland's internal regeneration a great change in the European situation of both Poland and Russia had come about as a result of the establishment of the German Empire in 1870. Before 1870 the Poles, like other Europeans, had regarded the menace of Russian aggression on the west

as the greatest danger to western Europe. An independent Poland would have a very real European importance as a barrier against such aggression, and it was on this fact that the Poles based their hopes of European assistance in their revolutions. After 1870, however, the danger of German pressure toward the east became a far greater danger than Russian pressure toward the west and one which Poland shared with Russia and the whole Slav world. By the end of the nineteenth century Russia was the only Slav state which was not keenly alive to the danger for Slavdom in the growth of the German influence in the east of Europe. The Slavs saw in the close union of Austria and Germany a far more dangerous enemy to their cause than their old traditional enemy Turkey, because of the far greater intelligence and efficiency of the new foe. The union of all Slavs against advancing Germanism they felt to be their first and greatest duty. In this battle against Germanism the Poles form the first line of defense. Not only is their country the most western of all Slav lands and thus geographically directly in contact with Germany, making their conquest the first step in German advance, but their civilization, also, is the only one that has withstood the eastward march of Ger-

manism. To make it strong still to withstand and ultimately to conquer became the great aim of Polish nationalism, the goal toward which the Poles regard it as their mission to Europe and to Slavdom, to struggle with all the forces of their being.

But to struggle effectively, they need to develop themselves both economically and politically to the highest possible point, and for this they need autonomy in government and, at the same time, Russian friendship. The Russian attempts at government in Poland have never met the most primary economic and social needs of the people. They have, on the contrary, brought about an internal condition little short of social anarchy, thus exposing the country to economic conquest by Germany, which is her first step toward political conquest. The desire of the Poles for autonomy is thus prompted, not merely by national pride, but by the imperative necessity for good government, and government on the lines of least resistance, which will set free the maximum of national energy for other purposes. To forget the wrongs and injustice suffered at the hands of Russia in the past and to make peace with her on the basis which will best serve their common interests — that is, autonomy within

## 306 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

the Empire — seemed to the National Democrats the course dictated by the most practical statesmanship as well as by the highest patriotism, and since 1902 it is for this reconciliation that they have worked.

Up to 1914 their efforts to get the Russian Government to see their point of view had been wholly unavailing. Berlin had seen to that. German diplomacy has worked unceasingly to keep up the enmity between Russia and her Poles and thus prevent their combination against her; and as Russia has never had either a constructive Polish policy or even any clear thought on Polish affairs, Germany has been successful. Russian Liberals, indeed, favored the autonomy of Poland, realizing that Germany alone benefited by the policy of Russification, but they were themselves in opposition to the Government and could exert no influence. Another group of Russians who warmly approved the objects of the National Democratic Party were the "Neo-Slavs," who were Pan-Slavists of a new type. Their idea was decentralization in government, local autonomy for all the various nationalities in the Empire, and their federation on the same general lines as the British Empire. But they also had no government influence, and it was



not until the defeats of Russia in the Japanese War led to revolts at home which resulted in the calling of the first Russian Duma, that these parties of opposition had a chance to express themselves.

With the opening of the first Duma the Polish question entered a new phase. The Ukrainian question had by that time reached a somewhat critical stage and was a potent influence, perhaps the decisive influence, in drawing together into close coöperation the Polish group or "Club" in the Duma and the Russian National Democrats or "Cadet Party." The Ukrainian question as a question of European importance originated in Austria and its understanding necessitates a consideration of the history of Austrian Poland since 1863.

### 3. AUSTRIAN POLAND

While Prussia and Russia were carrying out a policy which meant practically a constant state of war between the governments and their Polish subjects, the Austrian Poles were not only on terms of peace and friendship with the Austrian Government, but for many years acted as the very pillars of the monarchy.

After 1863 the Poles in Galicia, like those in

## 308 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

Posen and the Kingdom, definitely gave up the idea of independence as their national programme, accepted the hard fact of political division and alien rule, and turned their energies to preserving and strengthening their unity as a nation and their national culture under the three monarchies. The Polish national movement thus became a cultural, social, and economic movement, not a political one. Freed thus from fear of a Polish insurrection, and having no nationalism to maintain at all costs as had Germany and Russia, the Austrian Government could afford to make friends with its Poles, and there were a number of reasons why their friendship was advantageous.

In 1866 Austria was defeated in the war brought about by Prussia to decide the question, long contested between them, of the leadership of Germany. Prussia's victory meant Austria's exclusion from the new Germany of 1870 and the end, for the time being anyway, of her distinctively German policy. She was obliged to consider the possibility of making her Slav subjects the prop of her Empire. But Austria's Slav peoples were, with the single exception of the Poles, all more or less under the influence of the Pan-Slav idea with Russia as their leader. They were also agitating for a

reorganization of the Empire on a federal basis which would give freedom to each nationality to develop along its own lines. The Austrian Government feared and opposed both these movements and found in the Poles much the same feelings, and consequently, a readiness to support the Government — but always at the price of concessions to them. The Pan-Slavism of this period was the early Pan-Russian form of the movement, bound up with autocracy and Orthodoxy, to which the Poles were always opposed, because it meant giving up their nationalism and their Catholicism, which they could never do, and also because it meant the recognition of Russia as the chief of Slav peoples which the Poles believed themselves to be. Their objection to the federal system of government was that, if they accepted it and became a part of it, they would be bound to the Habsburg monarchy by a bond which it would be difficult to break and which would, therefore, prevent their ultimate political union with the rest of their nation — that union whose realization sometime, somehow, is, and has always been, the deep, often hidden, but abiding hope of every Pole.

· They chose, therefore, to remain a people apart and to support the Government and the

centralized system in opposition to a form of government which, under happier circumstances and different leadership, they would have delighted to champion. But they asked large rewards for their support. When in 1867 the new constitution or *Ausgleich* establishing the so-called Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary came into existence, the Poles consented to support it only in return for very important concessions; a special minister for Galicia in the new Government, a separate board of education for Galicia, a greatly extended use of Polish in the schools and its exclusive use in all branches of the administration.

In the Reichsrath, the lower legislative house of the new Government, the Poles had 57 votes, which made them often the controlling factor in giving the Government a majority, and like the Irish under similar conditions, they bought their freedom with their votes, supporting the Government only in return for concessions, which, in the course of a few years, amounted to practically complete administrative autonomy. By 1873 this process was about complete, and since that date the Poles have had the administration of Galicia in their hands and have been able to govern it in their

own interests. It has meant a great increase in Polish national feeling, a revival of Polish culture, and a considerable economic advance, especially in West Galicia.

All this has been, however, almost exclusively for the upper governing class, though the Polish peasantry in West Galicia have shared slightly in its benefits. In East Galicia the condition of the peasantry has remained deplorable, and even in West Galicia there has been no such economic reform as has transformed peasant conditions in Prussian and Russian Poland. The peasants were indeed emancipated from serfdom and given their land after the Revolution of 1848, but they remained uneducated and economically backward, their trade was hampered by artificial restrictions, their towns were small and poor, and the Jews, just as in Old Poland, formed the middle class. The chief reason for the difference between the two parts of the country and for the poverty and backwardness of East Galicia was the difference in race between the peasants and the governing class. East Galicia, the old principality of Halisch, belongs racially with the Russian Ukraine. Its people are Ruthenians or Little Russians, or, as they prefer to be called, Ukrainians, and are a part of that great people who

with Kiev as their capital *were* Russia from the tenth to the fourteenth century. Most of them are Uniate by religion (a minority are Orthodox) and have a distinct race-consciousness which during the past seventy-five years has expressed itself in a strong national movement for the preservation of their language and the development of their national culture. The Poles, who form only twenty-four per cent of the population, are the large landowners and the governing class, and, with the Roman Catholic clergy, have systematically oppressed the Ukrainians, forcing upon them the use of the Polish language, the Polish culture, and the Roman Catholic religion. Of this aristocratic minority the Little Russian nobles form an indistinguishable part. They were completely Polonized soon after the Polish conquest of Galicia and have been almost entirely unaffected by the modern Ukrainian national movement, which is thus of necessity essentially a peasant and working man's movement. It has identified itself with Socialism and other forms of radicalism, but has never lost its distinctively national characteristics. That the Polish nobles hated and opposed these radical ideas as much as she did herself was one of the chief reasons why Austria was willing to turn

the government of Galicia over to the Poles and was willing to pay for their support in the Reichsrath, where the Liberal German majority often seriously hampered the autocratic policies of the Government, as, for example, when they unitedly opposed the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908.

On the other hand, opposition to Ukrainian nationalism has been one of the few matters regarding which Poles and Russians were agreed. The Russian Government, in pursuance of its traditional Pan-Russian policy, has always refused to recognize its thirty million Little Russians as a separate race: "There never has been and never will be a Ukrainian language or nationality" a Russian minister of state declared in 1863, and Russia has labored as steadily to Russianize the Ukrainians in the Russian Ukraine as the Poles have to Polonize them in Galicia.

But in spite of all these efforts the Ukrainian national movement has continued to grow, and in the last twenty-five years has become a factor of importance in European diplomacy. Bismarck saw the possibilities of the movement as a means of opposition to Russia, and when he succeeded in drawing Austria away from Russia and into alliance with Germany he got her to

### 314 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

change her policy and to take measures to conciliate her Ukrainian subjects. A Ukrainian University at Lemberg, Ukrainian schools in East Galicia where the Ukrainian language was used and Ukrainian nationalism openly cultivated, as well as increasing toleration for the Ukrainian (Uniate) Church, were Austria's somewhat half-hearted concessions to this new policy, while politically she was holding out hopes of an autonomous Ukrainian state within the Austrian Empire after the defeat of Russia by Austria and Germany should have made possible the inclusion of the Russian Ukraine in such a state. Austria thus tried to use Ukrainian nationalism in her own interests just as she had so successfully used Polish nationalism. Her success was sufficient distinctly to alarm the Poles. By 1891 there was a Ukrainian group in the Reichsrath, and in the elections of 1895 to the Galician Diet Ukrainophil deputies only were elected in all the electoral districts (*curia*) where Ruthenians predominated. This meant that many of the so-called "Old Ruthenes," who were Orthodox in religion and inclined to cherish the Russian connection formed by their racial and religious unity with her, were won over to the national movement. Meanwhile, in southern Russia



Germany was secretly but effectively helping on the Ukrainian movement, and during the early years of the twentieth century, as the Austro-German union grew closer and closer, Austro-German encouragement of Ukrainian aspirations became increasingly alarming, not only to the Poles, but to many Russians as well, and disposed them to consider reconciliation with the Poles more seriously than ever before.

This was the situation when the first Russian Duma came together in 1906 and explains why the Russian Cadet Party was ready to meet the Polish National Democrats halfway, particularly as the latter were ready to abandon the policy of Polonizing the Ukrainians of Galicia and to let Russia absorb them, regarding this as preferable to the establishment of a Ukrainian state under Austro-German protection, which seemed to be the alternative. The Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, was generally regarded as a strong supporter of Ukrainian autonomy, and it was believed by the Poles that the German Emperor had promised the crown of the projected Ukrainian state to the children of the Archduke's morganatic marriage with the Duchess of Hohenberg.

## 316 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

The Poles of Galicia quite naturally regarded these developments with extreme concern. In spite of her efforts to reassure them, a profound suspicion of Austria's good faith in the Ukrainian matter opened a breach between them that widened rapidly as the Austro-German alliance tightened, and Austria's subservience to Germany awakened the gravest fears in regard to her future policy toward the Poles themselves. The result was that some years before the present war broke out the alliance of half a century between Austria and her Polish subjects was at an end. A large number of them had definitely turned against her. When the assassination of the Archduke occurred in June, 1914, they as well as other Poles regarded it with rejoicing as removing one of the most determined enemies of their nationalism, and when war followed the assassination they were ready to throw in their lot with Russia, seeing in her their only hope, even if not a very bright hope, of Slav freedom.

## CHAPTER X

### THE POLES AND THE WAR

THE years 1905 to 1914 were years of great importance in the *rapprochement* of Russia and the Poles. In the First Russian Duma the Polish National Democrats carried all the seats assigned to the Kingdom as well as twenty assigned to the Annexed Provinces. In the Second Duma practically the same thing happened in the Kingdom, but in the Annexed Provinces government pressure during the elections reduced the Polish representatives to twelve. But as they formed a solid unit acting always in harmony with the Polish Club from the Kingdom, the Poles still had forty-six votes and complete solidarity. It resulted from these conditions that in both Dumas the National Democrats were able to bring before the public of Russia and Poland, in a way never possible before, both their ideals and their accomplishments.

Their policy in both Dumas was the same: to form a group apart, a strictly national group, coöperating with other groups on the basis of

### 318 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

common interests, but never identifying themselves with any and acting always in the interests of Polish autonomy and nationalism. In the First Duma, aside from putting in a claim to autonomy when they first took their seats, the Poles did not aggressively champion their cause. In the Second Duma the Government, having got control of the revolution, was ready to resume its reactionary policy and put itself on record as opposed to the recognition of alien nationalities. This obliged the Poles to come forward with their programme of an entirely national régime. They also demanded the immediate introduction of the Polish language into all the Polish schools. Just at this time the Prime Minister Stolypin had a government programme before the Duma which the Duma either had to pass in its essentials or be dissolved. They knew it and were divided on the matter into two nearly equal parts, so nearly equal that the votes of the Polish group would decide the question. The most important parts of the government programme were an increase in the army and the approval of the budget. The Poles voted for the Government in regard to the army, to show, as they said, that they were ready to do their duty by the Government, but they expected national recognition in re-

turn. They also used the occasion to say that they wished to see Russia with an army strong enough to enable her to play an independent part in foreign affairs, which meant that the Poles were opposed to Russia's acceptance of German dictation in regard to Russian policies.

On the question of the budget the Poles declared that they regarded the budget as the expression of a system of government opposed to their national interests. But recognizing that it could not be immediately changed, they agreed to vote the budget on condition that the Government would show its good intentions by making a public statement in the Duma in favor of the use of Polish in the schools. Stolypin, however, refused to compromise with the Poles even in order to get his bills through, but instead dissolved the Duma and ordered a new election. In the new, the Third, Duma, the Polish representation was reduced to a third of its former size and thus made too small to play a decisive part. This blow, heavy as it was, was not without its advantages for the Polish cause. It brought the logic, intelligence, and practical efficiency of the Polish programme into sharp contrast with the entire absence of any constructive Polish policy on the part of the

Russian Government, and considerably increased the respect felt for Polish aims and methods among Russian Liberals.

By this time also the Pan-Slavists were keenly alive to the dangers for the Slav cause resulting from the close union between Austria and Germany, and also to the great service a Russo-Polish understanding would do to that cause, and a series of Pan-Slav Congresses held during 1908 had for their object the creation of such a union. At the Congress held at Petersburg early in the year M. Charles Kramarz, the Bohemian leader of the Pan-Slav movement, stated that the most important question of the moment was the reconciliation of Russia and Poland that they might unite in the All-Slav struggle against Germanism. The Polish representatives replied to this by the statement that they considered themselves at a turning-point in their history. After many centuries of struggle against peoples to the east of them — Tartars, Turks, and Russians — they now saw Poland's destiny to be to return to the earliest of all her tasks, the struggle against Germanism. In this struggle the Poles regarded all Slavs as their allies and placed themselves at the service of the great Slav cause.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ramon Dmowski, *La Question Polonaise*.

In the second Slav Congress, which met later in the same year at Prague, all the Slav nations except the Ukrainians were represented and the new Slav movement was put on foot. At this congress the Russian Neo-Slav Party and the Polish National Democrats united in common opposition to the Ukrainian movement and took up with zeal the persecution of these unfortunate people. This persecution took the form of a religious missionary movement. Russia sought, with Polish sanction, to "convert" the Ukrainian Uniates to Orthodoxy and to bring the "Old Ruthenes" who were Orthodox but Ukrainophil to the support of Russian political domination. Austria and Germany meanwhile supported the Uniate Church and dangled before the eyes of the Ukrainians the hope of autonomy and freedom.

Up to the outbreak of the Great War in August, 1914, the Russian Government remained firm in its traditional policy of refusing to recognize any nationality but Russian as existing within the Empire. When the war actually came, however, the Government made a prompt decision to win Polish support and on August 14, 1914, the Grand Duke Nicholas, commander-in-chief of the Russian arms, issued the following proclamation:—

## 322 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

Poles! The hour has struck in which the sacred dream of your fathers and forefathers may find fulfillment. A century and a half ago the living flesh of Poland was torn asunder, but her soul did not die. She lived in hope that there would come an hour for the resurrection of the Polish Nation and for sisterly reconciliation with Russia. The Russian Army now brings you the joyful tidings of this reconciliation. May the boundaries be annulled which cut the Polish Nation to pieces! May that nation reunite into one body under the scepter of the Russian Emperor. Under this scepter Poland shall be reborn, free in faith, in language, in self-government. One thing only Russia expects of you: equal consideration for the rights of those nationalities to which history has linked you. With open heart, with hand fraternally outstretched, Russia steps forward to meet you. She believes that the Sword has not rusted which, at Grünewald, struck down the enemy. From the shores of the Pacific to the North Seas, the Russian armies are on the march. The dawn of a new life is breaking for you. May there shine, resplendent above that dawn, the sign of the Cross, symbol of the Passion and Resurrection of Nations!

(Signed) Commander-in-chief General Adjutant,  
NICHOLAS.

In Russian Poland the proclamation met with an immediate and enthusiastic response. The Polish Club in the Duma had already at the outbreak of the war taken part in that most remarkable demonstration of loyalty, unique in Russian history, when all parties hitherto



irreconcilable pledged their support to the Government. The Club used the occasion of the proclamation, however, again to attest its loyalty and to express its confidence in the Government's good faith. On the day following the proclamation also the representatives of the four most important political parties met in Warsaw and issued the following statement: —

The representatives of the undersigned political parties assembled in Warsaw on 16 August, 1914, welcome the proclamation issued to the Poles by His Imperial Highness the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Forces as an act of the foremost historical importance, and implicitly believe that upon the termination of the war the promises uttered in that proclamation will be formally fulfilled, and that the dreams of their fathers and forefathers will be realized, that Poland's flesh, torn asunder a century and a half ago, will once again be made whole, that the frontiers severing the Polish Nation will vanish.

The blood of Poland's sons shed in united combat against the Germans will serve equally as a sacrifice offered upon the altar of her Resurrection.

(Signed) THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL PARTY.  
THE POLISH PROGRESSIVE PARTY.  
THE REALIST PARTY.  
THE POLISH PROGRESSIVE UNION.

But there were many Poles who took no part in this rallying to Russia and who, on the contrary, opposed it bitterly. It is not an easy

matter for a people to forget a long history of tyranny, oppression, and humiliation such as the Poles have suffered at the hands of Russia, and it is not remarkable that there were many in the Kingdom and many more in Galicia who could not bring themselves to support her. Almost all the Socialists and the members of other radical political organizations not countenanced by the Russian Government, who had suffered under the heavy hand of the Russian police, belonged to this group, as did also many Jews. A large number of the Jews of Poland were unwilling to call themselves Poles, but desired the recognition of their existence as a separate national as well as religious group. The National Democrats had opposed such recognition just as strenuously as they had opposed Ukrainian nationalism, and their anti-Semitic attitude, as well as the traditional anti-Semitic attitude of the Russian Government, had inclined the Jews to support Austria. Many Poles also still clung to the idea of an immediate independent Polish state and believed that their only chance of getting it lay in supporting Austria, the only power who since 1830 had given any official recognition to Polish nationalism.

During the Balkan wars the Independence

groups both in Galicia and in the Kingdom, seeing that the greater war was coming, prepared for it. Old organizations for military training, some of them in existence, secretly if not openly, since 1876, took on new life, and new ones for the same purpose came into being. Their object was the creation of a Polish military organization quite separate and distinct from those of any of the ruling governments. Such an organization, wherever it fought, would remind the world of Poland's existence as a nation and prepare the way for its official recognition after the war. The plans had been matured and the officers trained in Galicia, but the leaders counted on getting the greater part of their recruits from Russian Poland, where the slowness of mobilization and the lack of efficiency in the system made it far easier to escape mobilization orders than in either Austria or Prussia. As soon as war was declared, therefore, a "Secret National Government" was formed in Warsaw, where on August 3, 1914, notices were posted calling on the Polish nation to rise against Russia and join the revolutionary army coming from Galicia. On August 5, the first section of this "army" left Cracow and under the leadership of Joseph Pilsudski, a Russian subject, crossed the border into Kielce,

where, in the interval between the strategic retreat of the Russian armies to their first prepared lines and the arrival of the armies of Austria-Hungary, the independence of Poland was proclaimed and publicly celebrated. The Polish volunteers who had escaped Russian mobilization were organized into a "Polish Legion" which joined the armies of the Central Powers and took part in their first advance on Warsaw.

† In Galicia, where all the political parties were in touch with the "Secret National Government" in Warsaw, the influence of these events, together with the proclamation of the Austrian Government promising, with German coöperation, to restore "Liberty and Independence" to Poland, seemed to have destroyed all the Russophil tendencies so obvious before the war. Germany made no official promises, but it was freely stated, and generally believed in Galicia that the Kaiser had unofficially promised a restored Poland under a Habsburg prince, possibly the Archduke Charles Stephen, whose two daughters are both married to Poles connected with the old Polish royal house of Jagiello — one to Prince Jerome Radziwill and the other to Prince Alexander Olgierd Czartoryski. For a time these influences seemed

decisive and it looked as if the Galician Poles would side solidly with Austria. On August 16, the day following the Grand Duke's proclamation, all the Polish groups in the Galician Diet and in the Austrian Reichsrath held a conference, where they passed a unanimous resolution to support Austria and appointed a "Supreme National Committee" to raise legions, to succeed the "Secret National Government" of Warsaw as the representative of the cause of Polish independence, and to form after the war the "nucleus of the Polish State."

In spite of this unanimity the East Galician section of the committee was from the first suspected of treachery by the Ukrainians because of the presence among its members of several men who before the war had been distinctly and conspicuously pro-Russian. Their suspicions were justified when after the Russian occupation of Lemberg the East Galician legion disbanded and was found never to have taken the oath of allegiance to Austria, and East Galicia proclaimed itself, through its Pan-Polish newspapers, in full sympathy with the Russian occupation. Perhaps its "treachery" was the only method by which any Polish organization could get into existence to fight anywhere.

Having thus thrown in their lot with Russia, the vital question then was whether Russia would keep faith and grant the liberty she had promised. For a time it looked very doubtful. There was no change in the old autocratic methods of government in Russian Poland and the new Russian governor of Galicia inaugurated a Russifying policy which caused intense disappointment and led to vigorous protest both in the press and in the Duma. To Russia's credit be it said the situation improved very much in a short time. The bureaucrats in control of the administrative machinery were entirely opposed to the new policy, and with powerful influences behind them refused to make any change until they were sure of both the determination of the Government and the good faith of the Poles. But they were obliged finally to give way, and even those who had criticized most freely admitted later that Russia was doing all that could be expected under very difficult circumstances.

On the other side Austria had rewarded the services of her Polish legions by officially recognizing them as combatants in a note to the neutral Powers in October, 1914. But the terrible sufferings of the Poles during the German invasion and occupation — sufferings

perhaps greater than anything this most terrible of wars has caused elsewhere, even in crucified Belgium — roused all the old Polish antagonism to Germany and increased it a thousand fold, while the dominance of Germany over Austria has convinced even those most friendly to Austria that nothing more can be expected from her.

Meanwhile the wholesale destruction of the Poles during the repeated invasions and retreats of the contending armies across their country has raised the very grave question whether there will be a Polish nation or the materials for a Polish state after the war. The American representative of the Trans-Atlantic Food Fund claims that most of the Poles under six and over sixty years of age have died during the war. As the majority probably of those who survive are living in concentration camps, with insufficient food and under other bad hygienic conditions, it is almost inevitable that a large proportion of them also will die.

If any considerable number of the Polish people are still alive when the end of the war finally comes and a congress meets to arrange the terms of peace, it seems almost certain that national freedom will reward their sufferings and crown the hopes of many centuries. But

### 330 BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND

just what territories will go to form the new state the congress alone can decide. It is quite improbable, however, that much more than the Kingdom of 1815 will be included. Undoubtedly there are Poles not a few who dream of a revival of the old Polish Empire including Lithuania, Little Russia, White Russia, and West if not East Prussia, but no such revival is within the realm of practical possibilities, nor indeed would it be anything but a disadvantage to the Poles themselves. The argument of nationalism which gives Poland herself her chief claim to freedom is entirely against it, and the argument from history is a weak one. The union between the old Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania with its Russian provinces was never so close or so wholehearted as its creators desired or its official terms made it appear, and its duration was too brief to make any change in the national sentiments of the great masses of the population. From the practical point of view, also, the revival of a Polish Empire, even if it excluded East and West Prussia, would yet, even before the war, have meant the inclusion of a dangerously large non-Polish population with all its attendant religious complications. Since the war has decimated the Polish population,



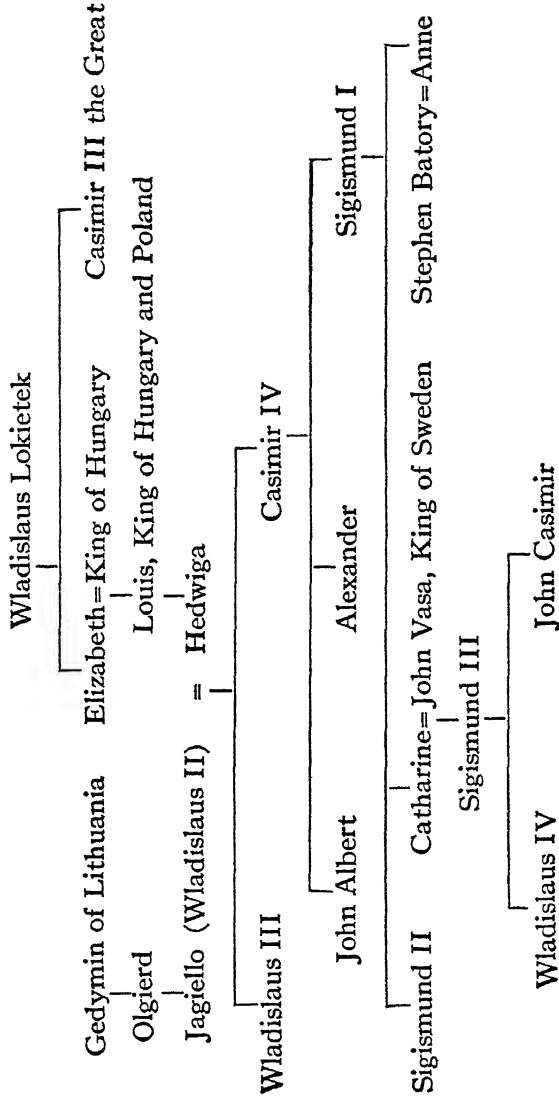
the chances of Polish nationalism holding its own in the midst of so large an alien population, even granting the latter's inevitable depletion by the war, would be slight and the chances of ultimate German control greatly enhanced. Neither the Poles nor the Allies can afford to take the risk.

The creation of an independent Polish state seems also at present a somewhat remote possibility. Even if such a state were limited to the boundaries of the Kingdom of 1815, where the Poles formed before the war the vast majority of the population, it is doubtful if it would be a success. The division of the Poles between Russia and Austria in the present war is the result, not of the accident of government merely or chiefly, but of radical differences of feeling and of policy among the Polish people. It shows that the internal divisions so characteristic of Old Poland in a measure still exist and will exist for some time in the future. Splendid as her progress has been, Poland is not yet sufficiently regenerated to be an independent state. Her best chance of a safe future lies within the Russian Empire. That the Russian bureaucracy, German in origin, in tradition, and containing a large German element in its personnel, the last stronghold of Germanism in

Russia, will not outlast the present war, is the opinion of all well-informed observers of Russian conditions. A liberal, middle-class influence is almost certain to follow the war, and under such a régime Poland will be secure in her autonomy and able to educate and prepare herself for a possible independence in a brighter future.

THE END

# THE JAGIELLON KINGS OF POLAND





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## INDEX

- Act of Confederation (1792), 223.
- Acts of 1717, 1733, 1736, depriving Dissidents of political and civil rights, 185.
- Agnes, wife of Wladislaus, 23.
- Agricultural Society, 267-71.
- Albert of Hohenzollern, 70, 71, 80, 145.
- Alexander, King of Poland (1501-1506), 66, 70-72.
- Alexander I, his favorable disposition toward the Poles, 247-49; prepares to reestablish Poland, 250; temperamentally an autocrat, 254; death, 257.
- Alexander II, Emperor, 266, 267, 271, 272, 294, 295.
- Alexander III, Emperor, 295, 298.
- Alexis, Czar, 143, 158.
- Altmark, Truce of (1629), 137.
- Andrusovo, Peace of (1667), 147.
- Anjou, Henry, Duke of, elected King of Poland, 99, 100; limitation of his powers, 101, 102; becomes King of France, 102; flees from Poland, 102, 103; deposed from Polish throne, 103.
- Anne, daughter of Wladislaus, wife of Ferdinand of Habsburg, 82.
- Appeal, 47, 48.
- Army, Polish, formed of nobles, 41; exemption from service in, done away with by Diet of 1527, 74; inefficient, 79; Stephen's, 107, 108; the "house militia," 171; improved after 1788, 207.
- Articles of Mielnica, 71.
- Assemblies, local, of principalities, 62, 63. *See* Dietines.
- Astrakan, 106.
- Augustus II, King of Poland (1697-1733), election of, 155; deposed, 157; restored by Peter the Great, 159; death, 161.
- Augustus III, King of Poland (1733-1763), 162-66, 188.
- Austria, her present attitude toward the Poles, xviii; a defense for Poland against the Turks, 83; Vienna rescued from the Turks, 153-55; rivalry with France for the Rhine and with Russia for the Danube, 160; opposes King Stanislaus, 162; and the Russo-Turkish War, 201; and the first partition of Poland, 202; her acquisitions at the third partition, 236, 237; and Treaty of Vienna, 242; is not a nation or race, but has regarded herself as a German state, 281; and Prussian rivalry, 281, 282; grants constitution to Galicia and Lodomeria, 282; makes friends with the Poles in Galicia, 307, 308; her Slav policy following the War of 1866, 308-10; and the Ukrainian question, 314-16; services of Polish legions rewarded by, in 1914, 328.

- Austrian intrigues of Sigismund III, 118-25.  
 Austrian Poland, 307-16.  
 Avars, the, 2.
- Bar, castle at, 84; Confederation of, 199.  
 Barons, 31.  
 Batory, Stephen, elected King of Poland, 103. *See* Stephen.  
 Batu, 30.  
 Beer, Kaspar, 74.  
 Berlin, 279.  
 Bettmans, the, 74, 75.  
 Bezdany, Stanislaus, 92.  
 Bialystok, 242.  
 Bishops, 90.  
 Bismarck, 280, 286, 313.  
 Bohemia, wars with Poland, 7, 8, 14, 17, 42; and Casimir III, 46, 64; becomes possession of the House of Habsburg, 82, 83.  
 Boleslaus I, King of Poland (992-1025), dispossesses his brothers, 7; aims to free Poland from the Empire and unite Poland and Bohemia, 7, 8; how far successful, 8; fails to restore Sviatopolk to throne of Kiev, 8; takes title of "King," 9; desires independence of Polish church, 9; and the See of Gnesen, 9; a great ruler, 9; his internal policy, 9, 10; beloved by his people, 10; political organization of Poland under, 11-13; had definite policy of Slav union, 19.  
 Boleslaus II (called the Dauntless), King of Poland, 15-17.  
 Boleslaus III, King of Poland, warfare with his neighbors, 17; reunites Silesia and Pomerania to Poland, 17; tries to re-Christianize the people, 17; divides Poland among his four sons, 18, 20, 22.  
 Boleslaus IV, King of Poland, 24, 34.  
 Boleslaus V, King of Poland, 37.  
 Bona, Queen, 84, 85.  
 Boner, John, 74.  
 Boris Godunov, 132.  
 Bosnia and Herzegovina, 313.  
 Brandenburg, 156; her designs on Poland, 166; the Mark of, 284.  
 Branicki, Ksawery, 222.  
 Braunsberg, 137.  
 Breslau, the See of, freed from dependence on Magdeburg, 9.  
 Brühl, Count, 163, 165.  
 Bülow, Prince von, on the German policy in Poland, 290.  
 Buonacorsi, tutor of John Albert, 69, 70.  
 Burgesses, deprived of right to hold land outside the city walls, 68; gradually depressed to level of peasantry, 69.
- Cadet Party, 307, 315.  
 Calvinists, 91.  
 Carelia, 134, 159.  
 Carlowitz, Treaty of (1699), 155.  
 Carpathians, boundary of Poland to the south, 2, 4, 5.  
 Casimir, son of Mieczyslaw II and King of Poland, 13-15.  
 Casimir, son of Wladislaus and King of Poland, 23-25; line of, 25; calls synod of bishops and creates advisory council, 32, 33; and Dukes of Pomerania, 34; rules through governors, 34.  
 Casimir III ("the Great"), King of Poland, 45-49, 58, 181.



- Casimir IV, King of Poland (1447-1492), xii; character, 59; accepts throne of Poland, 60; defeats Teutonic Order with help of the Prussian League, 60, 61; his struggle with the nobles, 61-63; alliance with King of Bohemia, 64; joins league against Turks and Tartars, 65.
- Casimir, John, prophecy of, as regards the fall of Poland, xiv.
- Castellans, the, 13.
- Castles, 13.
- Catharine, mother of Sigismund Vasa, 113, 116.
- Catharine, wife of John Vasa, 96, 97.
- Catharine II of Russia, plans to bring Poland under Russian control, 159, 187, 188; intrigues with Poniatowski, 191, 192; becomes Empress, 192; sends army into Poland, 193; succeeds in having Poniatowski elected King, 194; her hold on the King, 194-97; pushes bill enfranchising Dissidents, 198, 199; and the Turkish War, 201, 202; imposes conditions on alliance with Poland, 210, 211; makes terms with Turks at Jassy, 217, 218; invades Poland, 223, 224; and the second partition, 225-31; decides to crush Poland, 234; death, 236.
- Charles of Sudermania, 125.
- Charles X of Sweden, 143.
- Charles XI of Sweden, 156.
- Charles XII of Sweden, 156, 157.
- Chelm, Palatinate of, 237.
- Chenciny, Diet of (1331), 40.
- Chlopicki, General Joseph, 259.
- Chmielnicki, Bogdan, 140-42, 177.
- Chodkiewicz, 126, 131, 136.
- Christianity, entrance into Poland, 5, 6, 15, 17; adopted by Lithuanians, 44, 45.
- Church, Polish, and Boleslaus I, 9.
- Church, Roman Catholic, comes for the first time into political importance in Poland, 16; reforms of Hildebrand in, 25, 26; becomes free from kingly and princely government, 28; division of, into Western and Eastern, 53; union with Greek church in the "Union of Florence," 57; put on the side of the privileged under John Albert, 69.
- Church courts, 89, 90, 92.
- Churches, endowment of, 28.
- Classes in Poland, 11, 67-69, 168-78. *See* Nobles, Peasants, *Szlachta*.
- Clergy, influence of, increased, 18, 25; Hildebrand's reform of, 26; married, 27; immunities granted to, 28, 29, 32; colonists in Poland, 29; under Sigismund II, 87, 89, 90.
- Colonization, German, in Poland, 29, 30.
- Colonization Commission, 288, 289.
- Commerce, 179.
- Compact of Wilna (1401), 55.
- Condé, Prince of, 149, 150.
- "Confederacy," Polish, 240.
- Confederation, of 1590, 118; of 1592, 119; of 1606, 123; under John Casimir, 144; and Counter-Confederation, 165; of Reform Party after death of Augustus III, 193; at Radom, 197; of Bar, 199; of Targowica, 223, 225, 228.
- Congress Kingdom, 251, 252, 262.

- Congress of Vienna (1814), 250-53.
- Congresses of Pan-Slavism, 320, 321.
- Conrad, Duke of Masovia, 35, 36.
- Constantine, Grand Duke, 250, 253, 255-57, 273.
- Constantinople, 3; the church at, 53, 54; besieged by Turks, 59; captured by the Turks, 65; Catharine II's dream of ruling at, 187.
- Constitution of Poland, the district the unit of local government, 12; foundations of aristocratic government laid, 32; permanent advisory council created, 33; the first Diet, 40; all nobles admitted to share in King's counsels, 40; aristocratic constitution comes into existence, 50, 51; the "Privilege of Kaschau," 62; the "Statutes of Nieszawa," 62; the Dietines, 62-64; the Model Parliament, 67; the "Articles of Mielnica," 71; royal powers limited by Diet in 1504, 71, 72; Diet given permanent organization, 72; the *szlachta* curtail rights of burghers and peasants, 75, 76; privileges secured by House of Nuncios, 87, 88; the Diet by the "Union of Lublin," 94; provision for interregnum, 98, 99; the King and the Diet according to the *pacta conventa* with Henry of Anjou, 101; reform in, planned by Stephen, 109; unanimity of voting in Diet, 122, 123; veto power in Diet, 147, 148; efforts to change, 164, 165; description of, 167-78; unable to meet the test, 167; elective kingship, 168, 170, 230; upheld by Russia and Prussia in treaty of 1764, 189; efforts of Polish Reform Party to introduce new, 192-97; the "Confederation at Radom," 197; the "Constitution of 1773," 204; the "Four Years' Diet," 211; efforts of the Patriot Party to make a new, 218-21; evil features of the old, reenacted, 230, 231; of Duchy of Warsaw, 242, 243; granted by Alexander I, 253; under Alexander II, 272; of Republic of Cracow, 277; of Grand Duchy of Posen, 278; granted to Galicia, 282. See Nobles, *Szlachta*, Veto.
- Conti, Prince of, 155.
- Convocation Diet (1573), 98.
- Corvinus, Matthias, King of Hungary, 65.
- Cossacks, meaning of the name, 84, 127; used for defense of border by Sigismund I, 84, 128; brought into the army by Stephen, 128; registered, 128; Zaporoghian, 129; ranks joined by many, 130; not utilized by the Poles, 130, 131; allies of "The Thief," 134; and Wladislaus IV, 139, 140; their grievances against the Poles, 140, 141; war with Poland, 141; join Russia and lose their power, 142; put under joint dominion of Muscovy and Poland, 147; defeated by Sobieski, 151.
- Counter-Confederations, 165, 193.
- Counter-Reformation in Poland, 92.
- County magnates, 173.
- Courland, 37, 96, 237.

- Courts, Church, 89, 90, 92.  
 Courts of justice, 176.  
 Courts of the dynasts, 171, 172.  
 Coxé, English traveler, quoted, 180.  
 Cracow, annexed to Poland, 8; the See of, freed from dependence on Magdeburg, 9; importance of, in fourteenth century, 41, 42; University of, 58; Court of, under Queen Bona, 85; permission for Protestant church in, 93; kings crowned and buried at, 95; taken by Prince of Transylvania, 143; in the eighteenth century, 179; uprising in, after second partition, 232; at third partition falls to Austria, 237; Republic of, 251, 277; annexed to Austria, 277.  
 Crimea, 65.  
 Crusades, the, 36.  
 Cujavia, 22, 24, 25, 46, 202, 227, 242.  
 Czar of all Russia, 78.  
 Czardom of Poland, 251, 260.  
 Czartoryski, Prince Adam, 193, 248-50, 259.  
 Czartoryski, Prince Alexander Olgierd, 326.  
 Czartoryski, Prince Augustus, 164, 191, 192.  
 Czartoryski, Prince Michael, 164, 191, 192.  
 Czartoryski family, the, 164, 165, 190.  
 Czenstochowa, 143, 144.  
 Danes, the, 34.  
 Danube, rivalry of Austria and Russia for, 160.  
 Danzig, seized by the Pomeranians, 34; a trading center, 41, 42, 205; spread of Luther's doctrines in, 76; refuses to recognize Stephen, 104; King Stanislaus takes refuge in, 162; surrenders to the Russians, 163; coveted by the King of Prussia, 213, 217, 218, 222; acquired by Prussia at second partition, 227; made a free city, 242.  
 Daszkiewicz, Lord Marcher, 84.  
 Dembrinski, Chancellor, 102.  
 Democracy, the district an institution of, 12.  
 Denmark, 144, 156.  
 Deulino, Truce of (1618), 136, 138.  
 Diet, of Chenciny (1331), 40; and Dietines, 62, 63; of Piotrkow (1493), 67; revival of, under John Albert, 67; in two houses, 67, 87, 88; of 1496, 67, 68; of 1501, 70; of 1504, 71; of Radom (1505), 72; given a permanent organization, 72; of 1522, 74; of 1523, 74; of 1527, 74; of Piotrkow (1548), 86; eighteen months later, 87; of Piotrkow (1552), 90; of united Poland-Lithuania, meeting-place at Warsaw, 95; the Convocation (1573), 98; election (1573), 99, 100; election (1575), 103; election (1587), 112; of 1590, 118; extraordinary, of 1590, 118; Inquisition (1592), 119; of 1603, 120-22; of 1605, 122, 134; unanimity voting in, 122, 148; of 1606, 122; Truce of Altmark made by, 137; opposition of, to Wladislaus IV, 138-40; of 1646, 140; veto power in, 147, 148; election (1669), 150; towns at one time represented in, 178; agrees to the first partition of Poland, 202, 203; of 1773, 204; the

- Great (Four Years' Diet), 211, 224; of Grodno, 227-31; the Dumb Session, 229; of Duchy of Warsaw, 242; of Grand Duchy of Posen, 278; Galician, 314.
- Dietines, local assemblies, 62, 63; deputies of, sent to the National Diet, 67; curtail rights of citizens, 75, 76; votes of the poor nobles at service of magnates in, 174; of Samogitia, 209.
- Diets, of Poland, and of Lithuania, union of, 94; "exploded," 148, 163, 165, 170, 193.
- Dispossession Act, Polish, 289.
- Dissidents, deprived of political and civil rights, 185; cause taken up by Catharine II, 189, 190; did not want equality, 197, 198; Catharine pushes bill enfranchising, 198, 199.
- District, the, in early Poland, 12.
- Dmitri, Czar, 132, 133; the False, 133, 134.
- Dmowski, Ramon, quoted on the Polish question, 291; leader of National Democratic Polish Party, 303.
- Dnieper, the, 2, 3.
- Dobrawa, Princess, 6.
- Dobryzn, 46, 55.
- Dombrowski, Polish general, 240.
- Doroshenko, Cossack leader, 151.
- Drang nach Osten*, 285.
- Dress, national, of the Poles, 172.
- Dual Alliance, the, 161.
- Dual Monarchy, establishment of, 310.
- Duchy of Prussia, 80.
- Duchy of Warsaw, 242-46, 251.
- Dukes of Pomerania, 34.
- Duma, the, 307, 315, 317-20.
- Dumb Session, the, 229.
- Dynasts, 170-73.
- East Galicia, 311.
- East Prussia, 61, 136, 145; New, 237.
- Ecclesiastical Synod of 1542, 184 *n*.
- Edict *Nihil Novi*, 72.
- Education, of Polish magnates, 173; reorganization of, 207.
- Elbe, the, 2.
- Elbing, 137.
- Election Diet, of 1573, 99, 100; of 1575, 103; of 1587, 112; of 1669, 150.
- Elective kingship in Poland, 168, 170, 230.
- England, 146, 168, 216-18.
- Erick, King of Sweden, 116.
- Ermeland, 202.
- Ernest, Archduke, 100.
- Esthonia, 96, 114, 115, 159.
- "Exploded" Diets, 148, 163, 165, 170, 193.
- Expropriation Act, Polish, 289.
- "Family, The," 164.
- Federative System, the, 216.
- Ferdinand of Habsburg, 82, 83.
- Feudal system, never introduced into Poland, 12; in Lithuania, 54, 56.
- Firley, John, 100, 102.
- Florence, Union of (1434), 57, 121.
- Forests, 179.
- Four Years' Diet, 211, 212, 224.
- France, her interest in the election of the Kings of Poland, 160; rivalry with Austria for the Rhine, 160; alliance of, with Russia, 161;

- influence of, at the Polish Court, 161.
- Franz Ferdinand, Archduke, 315, 316.
- Frederick Augustus, King of Poland, election, 155. *See* Augustus II.
- Frederick Barbarossa, 23.
- Frederick the Great, has designs on Poland, 166; and the Notez River, 180; attitude toward Russian alliance, 188; urges a weak Poland, 195, 196; attitude toward Russo-Turkish War, 200-02; covets Polish Prussia, 200; suggests partition of Poland, 201, 202. *See* Prussia.
- Frederick William of Brandenburg (the "Great Elector"), 145, 146.
- Frederick William IV of Prussia, 279.
- Freemen. *See* Kmeten.
- Galicia, division of, between Poland and Lithuania, 47; goes to Russia, 202; at Treaty of Vienna, 242; conditions in, since 1815, 280-83; after 1863, 307-11; difference between East and West, 311; the Poles in, at the beginning of the Great War, 326, 327.
- Gedymín of Lithuania, 43, 44.
- German Empire, the influence of, a danger for Slavdom, 303, 304.
- German system of church immunity, 28, 29.
- Germans, pressure of, to the East in tenth century, 5, 6; influence in Poland in tenth century, 6; and Duke Mieczysław, 6, 7; influence in Poland under Queen Rixa, 13; colonization of, in Poland, 29, 30; not tenacious of their nationalism, 286, 290.
- Germany, her present attitude toward the Poles, xviii, xix; abiding danger to Slavic independence, 8; fails to conquer Poland, 10, 11; invades Poland under Boleslaus III, 17; her struggle against the Papacy, 19; conquers to the Oder, 34; aim of her diplomacy to create enmity between Russia and Poland, 306; and the Ukrainian question, 313-16. *See* Prussia.
- Glinsky, Helena, 79.
- Glinsky, Prince Michael, 78, 79.
- Gnesen, German Bishop of, 6; made a great shrine by Boleslaus I, 9; the See of, raised to metropolitan rank, 9.
- Grand Duchy of Posen, 278.
- Grand Hetman, 73.
- Great Diet, the, 211, 212, 224.
- Great Northern War, 156, 158, 159.
- Great Poland, 22, 222, 227.
- Greek Orthodox Church, history of, 53, 54; union with Roman Church in the "Union of Florence," 57; cause taken up by Catharine II, 190; Uniates forced into, 297.
- Gregory VII, Pope. *See* Hildebrand.
- Grodno, Diet of (1793), 227-31.
- Grosswardein, Peace of (1538), 83.
- Grudzinska, Jeannette, 256.
- Grünwald, battle of (1410), xii, 55.
- Gustavus Adolphus, 136, 138.

- Habsburg Emperors, 79, 82-84.  
 Halicz, 47.  
 Hanseatic League, 42.  
 Hedwig, Queen, xi, 49, 57, 58.  
 Henry, fourth son of Wladislaus, 22.  
 Henry II, Emperor, 8.  
 Henry IV, Emperor, 19.  
 Henry V, Emperor, 17.  
 Henry, Duke of Anjou. *See* Anjou.  
 Heresy, 89, 90.  
 Hildebrand, reform of, 25, 26.  
 Hohenberg, Duchess of, 315.  
 Hohenzollern Electors of Brandenburg, 145.  
 Holland, 146, 216.  
 Horodlo, Union of (1414), 56.  
 Hosius, 92.  
 Hospital of St. Mary, 36.  
 House militia, 171, 174.  
 Hungary, settlement of Magyars in, 2; and Wladislaus III, 59; Wladislaus of Bohemia elected King of, 65; crushed by the Turks, 81; becomes possession of House of Habsburg, 82, 83; joins the Turks, 153.  
 Hussites, the, 58, 64.  
 Igelström, General, 231-33.  
 Immaculate Conception, Order of, 139.  
 Immunity, Church, 28, 29.  
 Ingria, 159.  
 Innocent III, Pope, 27.  
 Inquisition Diet (1592), 119.  
 "Insurrection" of 1606, 123.  
 Interregnum, provision for, 98, 99.  
 Isabella, Queen of Hungary, 83.  
 Ivan III, Czar, 64.  
 Ivan IV, Czar, 96, 100, 106-08, 132.  
 Izba, House of Nuncios, 103.  
 Jagiello, Catharine, mother of Sigismund Vasa, 113, 116.  
 Jagiello, Grand Duke of Lithuania and King of Poland, marries Hedwig, xi, 49; and Witowt of Lithuania, 51, 52, 55, 56; religious tolerance of, 58; his rule of Poland, 58, 59.  
 Jagiellon dynasty, character of, 50; in possession of four thrones, 65; champions of the towns, 75.  
 Janowiec, battle of (1606), 123.  
 Jasna-Gora, Convent of, 143.  
 Jassy, Treaty of (1792), 218.  
 Jena, battle of (1806), 249.  
 Jendrzow, 119.  
 Jesuits in Poland, 92; intolerance of, 185; and education, 207; intolerance partly responsible for ruin of Poland, 302.  
 Jewish Judge, the, 182.  
 Jews in Poland, 180-84, 324.  
 John, King of Sweden, 113-16.  
 John III (Sobieski), King of Poland, fights the Cossacks and the Turks, 151, 152; elected King, 152; character of, 152; decline of Poland under, 152, 153; his rescue of Vienna from the Turks, 153-55; death, 155.  
 John Albert, King of Poland (1492-1501), 64, 66-70.  
 John Casimir, King of Poland, 141-49.  
 John Vasa, Duke of Finland, 96, 97.  
 Jordan, German Bishop of Gnesen, 6.  
 Kamieniec, 151, 152, 155.  
 Kara Mustafa Kiuprili, 153.  
 Karnkowski, Primate, 112-14.  
 Kaschau, Privilege of (1374), 62.

- Kazan, 106.  
 Ketler, Gothard von, 96.  
 Kiev, capital of first Russian state, 3; throne of, 8; Mary, sister of Grand Prince of, 15; voluptuous life at, 15; abandoned to the Polovstui, 22; under Lithuanian rule, 44; ceded to Russia, 147.  
 Kingship, elective, in Poland, 168, 170, 230.  
 Kirkholm, battle of (1605), 126.  
*Kmeten* (freemen), 11, 32, 41, 48, 176.  
 Knights of the Sword, 37, 95, 96.  
 Kolberg, See of, freed from dependence on Magdeburg, 9.  
 Konarsky, Stanislaus, 164.  
 Koniecpolski, Stanislaus, 137.  
 Kordecki, Augustus, 143.  
 Kosciuszko, Thaddeus, 225; goes into exile, 226, 227; returns to Poland and is made Commander-in-Chief, 231, 232; made Dictator, 233; his splendid fight, 234, 235; wounded and taken prisoner, 236; makes home in France, 236; saber taken from the Turks by Sobieski sent to, 241; holds aloof from Napoleon, 244; Alexander I and, 248.  
 Kramarz, Charles, 320.  
 Krzemieniec, 84.  
 Kulm, 36, 37, 46.  
 Kulmerland, 202, 242.  
 Land tax of 1774, 206.  
 Laski, Jan, 83.  
 LeClerc, General, 241.  
 Lelewel, historian, 258.  
 Lemberg (Lwow), 47, 179; Ukrainian University at, 314.  
 Leszczynski, Stanislaus, King of Poland, 156, 157, 161, 162, 176.  
 Leszek, son of Boleslaus IV, 24, 25.  
 Leszek, the Black, King of Poland, 37.  
 Leszek, the White, King of Poland, 33-35.  
 Liberty of the individual, theory of, 170.  
*Liberum veto*, xiii, 147, 189, 192, 196, 211, 221, 230.  
 Literature of Poland, 97.  
 Lithuania, significance of union with Poland, xi; rise of, 42, 43; conquers Russian provinces, 43, 44; brought into contact with Christianity, 44, 45; gets part of Galicia, 47; united with Poland under Queen Hedwig and Jagiello, 49, 50; union of, with Poland, opposed by Teutonic Knights, 51, 52; religion basis of antagonism between Poland and, 54; other reasons for opposition between Poland and, 54, 55; feudally organized, 54, 56; in Union of Horodlo, 56; arrangement of Uniate Church adopted in, 57; union with Poland strengthened by Casimir III, 65, 66; takes Kings of Poland for Grand Dukes, 70; real union of, with Poland effected, 94; invaded by the Muscovites, 143; part of, falls to Russia by first and second partitions of Poland, 227; at the third partition, 237.  
 Lithuanian College at Prague, 58.  
 Little Poland, 22, 237.  
 Little Russia, 227, 297.  
 Little Russians, 311-13.  
 Livonia, taken by Teutonic Knights, 37; acquisition of, by Poland, 95; Reformation in, 75; struggle of Ivan IV

- and Stephen for, 106, 107;  
invaded by Swedes, 125;  
saved for Poland at battle  
of Kirkholm, 126; Muscovy's  
claims on, renounced to Sweden  
by Shuiski, 134; invaded by  
Gustavus Adolphus, 136; in  
Swedish hands, 137; recovered  
by Poland, 139; ceded to Charles  
X, 146; in possession of Peter  
the Great, 159; Polish, goes  
to Russia, 202.
- Local government, the district  
the unit of, 12.
- Lodomeria, 282.
- Louis, son of Wladislaus, 83.
- Louis XIV of France, 161.
- Louis XV of France, 161.
- Louis of Anjou, King of Poland,  
49, 62.
- Lovicz, Countess (Jeannette  
Grudzinska), 256.
- Lubecki, Francis, 300.
- Lubecki, Prince Xavier, 255,  
260.
- Lublin, Union of (1569), xii,  
94; at third partition falls  
to Austria, 237.
- Lubomirski, rebellion of, 146,  
149.
- Lunéville, Peace of (1801), 241.
- Lutherans, 91.
- Maciegowice, 236.
- Madalinski, General, 232.
- Magnates (*pans*) of Poland,  
12, 170-73.
- Magyars, invasion of, into Europe,  
2; permanent settlement of,  
on plains of Hungary, 2.
- Majority and minority voting,  
122, 123.
- Mantua, battle of (1799), 241.
- Manufactures, 179, 206.
- Maria, Archduchess, 120.
- Maria, daughter of Palatine  
of Sandomir, 134.
- Maria Theresa, Empress, 202.
- Mary, sister of Grand Prince  
of Kiev, 15.
- Maslav of Masovia, 14.
- Masovia, marshes in, 5; Maslav  
of, 14; left to Boleslaus IV,  
22; inherited by Leszek, 24;  
obtained by Casimir, 25; Teutonic  
Knights settle in, 33; Prussians  
invade, 35; ruled by its own duke,  
39; accepts suzerainty of Poland,  
48; united with Poland, 84; part  
of, falls to Prussia by second  
partition, 227; remainder falls to  
Prussia by third partition, 237.
- Maximilian, Archduke, 112,  
114, 118.
- Maximilian II, Emperor, 100,  
103, 104.
- Memel, 137.
- Mendovg of Lithuania, 43.
- Michael Romanoff, 135, 136,  
138, 158.
- Michael Wisniowiecki, King  
of Poland, 150-52.
- Michelow, 46.
- Mieczyslaw I, Duke, first non-  
legendary ruler of Poland, 4;  
becomes Christian and marries  
Christian princess, 6; opposed  
by Germans, 6; makes friends  
with Germans, 6; receives German  
help against Bohemians, 7; legend  
concerning his blindness, 7; his  
sons, 7.
- Mieczyslaw II, 13.
- Mieczyslaw III, 22, 24, 32,  
33; line of, 25.
- Mielnica, Articles of, 71.
- Mieroslawski, Louis, 269, 279.
- Mines, 179.
- Moldavia, Polish suzerainty  
over, 65; ravages Poland, 70;  
hostility of, to Poland under  
Sigismund I, 81; submission  
of, to Turkish suze-



- rainy, 81; Polish claim to, 126; a part of modern Roumania, 201.
- Monasteries, foundation of, 28; assist German colonization in Poland, 29.
- Mongols, 30.
- Monti, French Ambassador, 162.
- Montluc, 99.
- Moravia, annexed to Poland, 8.
- Muscovy, under Ivan III, 64; pressure of, upon Lithuania, 70; and Poland, permanent hostility between, 77, 78; Sigismund I's relations with, 78, 79; obtains Polotsk in 1569, 97; in time of Stephen, 104-06; defeated by Stephen, 106, 107; anarchy of, following reign of Ivan IV, 132; election of Michael as Czar of, 135; recognition of Michael as Czar of, 136, 138; invades Lithuania, 143; defeated by Poland in the Thirteen Years' War, 146; advance of, under Michael, Alexis, and Peter the Great, 158, 159. *See* Russia.
- Napoleon Bonaparte, takes possession of Northern Italy, 239; leads Poles to think he will assist their cause, 240; conquers Prussia, 242; forms Duchy of Warsaw, 242; and Treaty of Vienna, 242; feeling of the Poles toward, 244, 245; defeat in Russia, 246.
- National Democratic Polish Party, 301, 303, 306, 315, 317, 321.
- National League, the, 302.
- National Patriotic Association, 256, 258.
- National Polish Church, movement for, in Poland, 91-93.
- Nationalism, democratic, teaching of the National League, 302.
- Neo-Slavs, 306, 321.
- Netze, the, boundary of Poland to the north, 4, 5; district of, goes to Russia, 202; district of, taken from Prussia, 242.
- New East Prussia, 237.
- New Silesia, 237.
- Nicholas I, Emperor, 257, 264, 266, 297.
- Nicholas II, Emperor, 295.
- Nicholas, Grand Duke, xvii, 321, 322.
- Nieszawa, Statutes of (1454), 62.
- Nihil Novi*, Edict, 72.
- Nobles, Polish, 11, 12; increase in power of, under Mieczyslaw II, 13, 18; immunities acquired by, 31, 32; increase in power of, under Wladislaus Lokietek, 40; greater and lesser, 41; form main army, 41; in Lithuania, 56; and Casimir IV, 60-62; subjection of other classes to, 67-71; and military service, 74; election of King by, 99; power wholly in hands of, 167; weakness of, 168-70; responsible for Poland's fall, 169; number of, 169; whom they included, 170; the magnate families, 170-73; other grades of, 173-75; their chief virtue and their chief vices, 175; rich lands in hands of, 205; reduced profits of, after first partition, 205, 206; assist reformers, 206. *See* Szlachta.
- Norsemen, in Russia, 3; in Poland, 4.
- Notez River, the, 180.

- Novgorod-Severski, province of, 136.  
 Novi, battle of (1799), 241.  
 Novosiltsoff, Nicholas, 254-56.  
 Nuncios, in the Polish Parliament, 67; privileges claimed by, 87, 88.  
 Nystädt, Peace of (1721), 159.
- Oginski, Count, 240.  
 Old Ruthenes, 314, 321.  
 Olgierd of Lithuania, 45, 47.  
 Oliva, Peace of (1660), 146.  
 Organic Statute of 1832, 259, 261.  
 Orthodox Church. *See* Greek-Orthodox Church.  
 Ostrowski, Count Wladislaus, 226, 258.  
 Otto III, Emperor, 9.
- Pacta Conventa*, xiii, 71, 101.  
 Pan-Germanism, x, xvi.  
 Panin, Count, 195.  
*Pans*, the, 12, 170-73.  
 Pan-Slavism, 2; under Boleslaus I, 8; in modern Russia, 263; a defense against German influence, 304; Congresses of, 320, 321.  
 Parliament, Polish, 67.  
 "Partitional Period," the, 18, 63.  
 Party of Conciliation, 301.  
 Paskievich, 260.  
 Patriarchates, 53.  
 Paul, Emperor, 236, 248.  
 Peaceful penetration, 284.  
 Peasants, Polish, 176-78, 270, 271, 292-94, 302, 303, 311.  
 Permanent Committee, the, 204.  
 Peter the Great, 155, 157-59; takes title of "Emperor of all Russia," 159.  
 Peter III of Russia, 188.  
 Piast, legendary founder of Polish state, 4.
- Pilsudski, Joseph, 325.  
 Piotrkow, Diet of 1493 at, 67; Diet of 1548 at, 86; Diet of 1552 at, 90.  
 Pitt, and the Triple Alliance, 216; his plan for Poland, 216, 217.  
 Plattburg, Walter von, 95.  
 Podiebrodski, George, 64.  
 Podlachia, 230, 237.  
 Podlesia, 227, 237.  
 Podolia, 55; taken by Prince of Transylvania, 143; invaded by Turks, 151; recovered by Poland by Treaty of Carlowitz, 155; Austria obtains a piece of, by first partition, 202; Russia obtains part of, by second partition, 227.  
 Pola, kings elected on field of, 95.  
 Poland, summary of history of, x-xv; her present relation to Russia, Germany, and Austria, xv-xix; real history begins with tenth century, 1; the founding of a state, 4, 6; limits of, 4, 5; shifting of eastern and western frontiers of, 5; becomes Christian state, 6; a recognized part of Western Christian world at Mieczyslaw's death, 7; under Boleslaus I, 7; "the unconquered kernel of Western Slavdom," 10, 11; political organization of, under Boleslaus I, 11-13; feudal system introduced into, 12; under Mieczyslaw II and Queen Rixa, 13, 14; under Casimir, son of Mieczyslaw II, 14, 15; under Boleslaus II, 15-17; Church for first time comes into political importance in, 16; under Wladislaus Herman, 17;

under Boleslaus III, 17, 18, 34; division of, by Boleslaus III, 18, 20, 22; the "Partitional Period," 18, 19; her lost opportunity to become a western European state, 19, 20; two hundred years of anarchy in, 22; under Wladislaus, son of Boleslaus III, 22-24; under Boleslaus IV, 24, 34; church reforms in, 27; immunity of clergy introduced into, 28, 29, 32; German colonization in, 29, 30; swept by Tartars, 30; immunities acquired by nobles in, 31, 32; acts of Casimir, son of Wladislaus, 32, 33; under Leszek the White, 33-35; under Conrad, 35, 36; further Germanization of, 37; lowest point in degradation of, 38; under Wacław, 38; under Wladislaus Lokietek, 38-42, 45; coronation of kings of, 39; under Casimir III, 45-49; gets East Galicia, 47; under Louis of Anjou, 49; united with Lithuanian Empire, 49, 50.

Rise of aristocratic constitution in, 50; union of Lithuania and, opposed by Teutonic Knights, 51, 52; antagonism between Russian Lithuania and, had religious basis, 54; other reasons for opposition between Lithuania and, 54, 55; the Union of Horodlo, 56; under Jagiello, 58, 59; obtains Pomerelia, 60, 61; Casimir III's struggle with the nobles, 60, 61; the Dietines, 62, 63; union with Lithuania strengthened by Casimir III, 65, 66; Model Parliament of, 67; advance

of *szlachta* to class apart, 67-71; condition at Alexander's death, 72; under Sigismund I, 72-85; entrance of the Reformation into, 76, 89; and Muscovy, 77-79; army inefficient owing to *szlachta* control, 79; hostility of Turks to, 79-81; recognizes secularization of Duchy of Prussia, 80; union of Masovia with, 84; the Diet, 87, 88; religious liberty in, 90; reformers in, 90, 91; sects in, 91; movement for national Church in, 91-93; Counter-Reformation in, 92; Jesuits in, 92; real union of, with Lithuania effected, 94; acquisition of Livonia, 95; unites with Sweden to oppose Muscovites, 97.

At the height of her prosperity under Sigismund Augustus, 97; period of great literature, 97; confusion in, at death of Sigismund Augustus, 98; election of Duke of Anjou as King of, 99, 100; limitation of power of Kings by *pacta conventa*, 101; Stephen Batory elected King of, 103; foreign policy of Stephen, 104-09; internal policy of Stephen, 109-11; election of Sigismund Vasa as King, 113-15; religious persecution in, under Sigismund Vasa, 117; Austrian intrigues of Sigismund and civil war, 118-25; Livonia saved for, by battle of Kirkholm, 126; Turks defeated by (1619), 132; war with Muscovy, 132; part taken by, in Russian domestic affairs, 133-36; war with Gustavus Adolphus, 136, 137; recovers Prussian

territory and Livonia, 139.

Struggle of King with Diet, 139, 140; under John Casimir, 141-49; war with the Cossacks, 141, 142; loses the Ukraine, 142; attacked by Muscovites and Swedes, 143; Charles X of Sweden set up as King of, 143; defense of Czenstochowa, 143, 144; buys allies, 144, 145; in the Thirteen Years' War, 146, 147; effect of veto power in Diet of, 147, 148; war with Turks at time of Michael, 151, 152; decline of, under Sobieski, 152, 153; in the Great Northern War, 156; the ruin of, 157; Russian influence established in, 159; Peter the Great's plans with reference to, 159; influence of France at court of, 161; period of stagnation during the reign of Augustus II, 163-66.

Lacked strong government, 167; elective kingship in, a misfortune, 168; weakness of the nobility of, 168-70; nobility responsible for her fall, 169; ruled by a few great families, 170; the courts of the dynasts and their house militia, 171, 172, 174; the national dress, 172; retainers of the magnates, 172, 174, 175; education of magnates, 173; the non-magnate classes of the nobility, 173-75; the chief virtue and the chief vices of the nobility, 175; the peasants, 176-78; the towns of, 178, 179; natural riches of the country unworked, 179, 180; the Jews in, 180-84; torn by antagonisms, 184-86; religious persecution in,

184; the fall of, foretold, 185, 186.

Made the tool of foreign powers, 187; Russia of predominant influence in, 187; treaty of Russia and Prussia aimed at, 189; not allowed to reform her government, 189; Dissidents supported by Catharine II, 189, 190; efforts of Reform Party to change the Constitution, 192, 193; Catharine sends army into, 193; Poniatowski elected King, 194; the question of a strong or a weak, 195, 196; weakness of the King, 196; further efforts of the Reform Party, 196; the King yields to the Empress, 196, 197; attitude of Dissidents toward question of equality, 197, 198; in civil war over the religious question, 199; and the Russo-Turkish War, 200; first partition of, 201-03; governed by Russia, 203, 204; under the Constitution of 1773, 204; economic and social reforms in, 204, 206; results of partition on revenues and incomes, 205, 207; reorganization of education in, 207; divergent views of the King and the Patriot Party as to political future of, 208; aims to free herself from Russian control, 209, 210; the Great Diet, 211, 212, 224; and Prussian alliance, 211-13; Prussia covets territory of, 213; nature of Prussian alliance, 214; as regards the wisdom of the Prussian alliance, 214-16; and the Triple Alliance of Pitt, 216; England promotes commercial treaty between

Prussia and, 217; adoption of new Constitution, 218-21; intrigues of Russia for reconquest of, 221-24; the King acquiesces in Russia's terms, 225, 226; second partition of, 227; resistance to Russian demands, 228; forced to accept Prussian treaty, 229; virtually made a Russian province, 230, 231; indignation in, over second partition, 231; revolution of 1794 in, 231-36; third partition of, 236-38.

Establishment of Duchy of Warsaw, 242; Constitution of, 242, 243; introduction of Code Napoléon into, 243; hopes of a new, 244-46; again taken by Russia, 246; Alexander I determines to restore, 247-49; disposition of territories of, as result of Congress of Vienna, 250-52; Constitution of, granted by Alexander I, 253; under the new Constitution, 253-56; Revolution of 1830, 257-59; declared integral part of Russian Empire, 259, 260; under the Organic Statute of 1832, 259-61; policy of Russia toward, since 1831, 262; policy of Emperor Nicholas toward, 264, 265; disposition of Alexander II toward, 266, 267, 271, 272; revolutionary spirit active in, 268-71; complete independence of, desired, 273; revolution of 1863 in, 274-76; conditions in Republic of Cracow since 1815, 277; conditions in Posen since 1815, 278-80; conditions in Galicia since 1815, 280-83.

Prussian, 284-92; constant expansion of Prussia

into, 284, 285; Prussian Government opponent of freedom of, 285, 286; Prussian policy toward, stiffened since 1871, 286, 287; increase of nationalism, 287; proceedings of Colonization Commission in, 288, 289; successful opposition to Germanization in, 289, 290; aims of Prussia in her struggle with, 291, 292.

Russian, 292-307; agrarian reforms of Russia in, 292, 293; system of local administration of Russia in, 293, 294; Russification of, 294-97; recent progress of, 298; native middle class formed in, 299; industrial classes in, not in favor of independent state, 299; modern Poles believe in autonomous state within Russian Empire, 300, 301, 305, 306; work of the National League in, 302, 303; the National Democratic Polish Party, 303; the first line of defense against Germanism, 304.

Austrian, 307-16; and the Dual Monarchy, 310; East and West Galicia, 311.

Poles, ancestors of, 1; part of Western Slavic group, 2; signification of name, 4; claim to be purest of Slavs, 4; united into single state in tenth century to oppose Germans, 6; join Napoleon's forces, 239, 240; in battles of 1799, 241; at St. Domingo, 241; feeling of, toward Napoleon, 244, 245; join the Grande Armée on march into Russia, 246; favorable disposition of Alexander I toward, 247-56; spirit of, from Revolution of 1830,

- 265, 266; and the Ukranian attitude of Germany and Austria, 307, 315, 316; in East Galicia, 312; *rap-prochement* between Russia and, 317-20; in the Duma, 317-20; Russian proclamation concerning, at the beginning of the Great War, 321, 322; their reception of the Russian proclamation, 322-24; support given Austria by, 324-26; in Galicia, at the beginning of the War, 326, 327; their treatment in the War, 328, 329; prospects for, after the War, 329-32.
- Polish Church and Boleslaus I, 9.
- Polish Expropriation or Dispossession Act, 289.
- Polish League, the, 302.
- Polish Prussia, 61.
- Polish question, the, ix.
- Politics, game of, in Poland, 173, 174.
- Polock, 107.
- Polotsk, 97, 143.
- Polovstui, the, 22.
- Poltava, battle of (1709), 157.
- Pomerania, reunited to Poland, 17; becomes independent duchy, 33; Dukes of, 34; in possession of Teutonic Knights, 39, 46; Frederick William aims to conquer, 145.
- Pomerelia, 60, 61.
- Pomerellen, 37.
- Poniatowski, Prince Joseph, 225-27, 246.
- Poniatowski, Count Stanislaus, 190.
- Poniatowski, Stanislaus Augustus, King of Poland. *See* Stanslaus (Augustus Poniatowski).
- Posen, province, 251; Grand Duchy of, 278.
- Potemkin, 221.
- Potocki, Felix, 222.
- Potocki, Ignacy, 226, 236.
- Potocki, Theodore, 162.
- Pradt, M. de, 245.
- Praga, 235.
- Pretficz, Bernard, 84.
- Princes, Polish, 30-32.
- Privilege of Kaschau (1374), 62.
- Prussia, Duchy of, 80; coast towns in Swedish hands, 137; Poland recovers parts conquered by Gustavus Adolphus, 139; her designs on Poland, 166; becomes a great power, 187; alliance with Russia, 188, 189; and the first partition of Poland, 202; and the proposed Polish-Russian alliance, 210, 211; alliance with Poland, 211-13; covets Polish territory, 213; nature of the alliance, 214; as regards the wisdom of the alliance on Poland's part, 214-16; in Pitt's Triple Alliance, 216; England promotes commercial treaty between Poland and, 217; resolves to leave the Triple Alliance, 218; aims at second partition of Poland, 218; refuses to carry out treaty with Poland, 224, 225; and Russia, agree on second partition, 227; acceptance of treaty with, forced on Poland, 229; her acquisitions at the third partition, 236, 237; becomes rival of Austria, 281; "peaceful penetration" and *Drang nach Osten* settled policies of, 284, 285; Kingdom of, how formed, 284; steady and consistent opponent of Polish freedom, 286; Polish policy stiffened since 1871,

- 286, 287; the Colonization Commission, 288, 289; lack of success in Germanizing Poland, 289, 290; aims of, in her struggle with Poland, 291, 292. *See* East Prussia, West Prussia.
- Prussian League, 60.
- Prussian Poland, 284-92.
- Prussians, invade Poland, 14, 17; invade Masovia, 35.
- Radom, Diet of (1505), 72; Confederation of (1767), 197.
- Radziejowski, 143.
- Radziwill, Barbara, 85, 86.
- Radziwill, Janus, 143.
- Radziwill, Prince Jerome, 326.
- Radziwill, Nicholas (called "the Black"), 86, 91, 124.
- Radziwill Bible, the, 91.
- Rapnin, Prince, 195-97.
- Raslawice, battle of, 233.
- Recruiting, methods of, 274.
- Red Russia, 202, 237.
- "Reds" and "Whites," 258, 268, 276.
- Reformation, the, 76, 89, 95.
- Reformers in Poland, 90, 91, 93.
- Republic of Cracow, 251, 277.
- Retainers of the Polish magnates, 172, 174, 175.
- Revolution of 1794, 231-36.
- Revolution of 1830, 252, 257-59.
- Revolution of 1863, 274-76.
- Revolution of 1904 in Russia, 295.
- Revolutionary National Government, 282.
- Rhine, rivalry of France and Austria for, 160.
- Rixa, Queen, 13, 14.
- Rokosz* (Insurrection), 123, 125.
- Roman Prince of Halicz, 65 *n.*
- Romans, the, 1.
- Roumania, 201.
- Rurik, chief of the Varangians, 3.
- Russia, expansion of, to the south, 2; steppe north of Black Sea, 3; first state built up by the Varangians, 3; result of theory of seniority as basis of succession in, 22; West, provinces of, invaded by Lithuanians, 44; religion, learning, art, etc., of, derived from Constantinople, 54; under Ivan IV, 106; under Theodore, Boris, Dmitri, and Shuiski, 132, 133; "The Thief of Tushino," 133, 134; election of Michael Romanoff, 135; and the Cossacks, 142; at Peace of Andrusovo, 147; combines with other powers against Sweden, 156; under Michael, Alexis, and Peter the Great, 158; "Emperor of all," 159; influence of, established in Poland, 159; plans of Peter the Great toward Poland, 159; alliance of, with France, 161; rivalry with Austria for the Danube, 160; opposes King Stanislaus, 162; her designs on Poland, 166; of predominant influence in Poland, 187; alliance with Prussia, 188, 189; at war with the Turks, 199-201; and the first partition of Poland, 202; governs Poland, 203, 204; and proposed Polish alliance, 209-11; withdraws from Poland, 212; alarm at successes of, 215; Pitt's alliance directed against, 216; makes treaty of peace with Turks, 218; intrigues for reconquest of Poland, 221-24; King of

- Poland acquiesces in terms of, 226; and Prussia, agree on second partition, 227; forces Prussian treaty on Poland, 229; Poland virtually province of, 230; puts down revolution of 1794, 232-36; her acquisitions at the third partition, 236-38; again takes Poland after defeat of Grande Armée, 246; Poland declared integral part of Empire, 259, 260; policy of, toward Poland, 262; two general types of emperors of, 262, 263; Pan-Slavic idea in, 263; her agrarian reforms in Poland, 292, 293; her system of local administration in Poland, 293, 294; her ruthless policy in Poland, 294-97; the Duma, 307; attitude of, toward the Ukrainians, 313; *rapprochement* between Poles and, 317-20; Polish proclamation of, at the beginning of the Great War, 321, 322; her attitude toward the Poles since the beginning of the War, xvii, 328. *See* Muscovy.
- Russian Poland, 292-307.
- Russians, settle in valleys of the Dnieper and its tributaries, 2; trade with Scandinavia and Constantinople, 3; invade Poland under Queen Rixa, 14.
- Ruthenians, 311, 314.
- Rzewuski, Seweryn, 222.
- St. Adalbert, Bishop of Prague, 6, 9.
- St. Domingo, 241. *?*
- St. Petersburg, 191.
- Salt mines, 205.
- Samogitia, 37, 52, 55, 91, 209, 230, 237.
- Sandomir, 22, 23, 237.
- Sardinia, King of, 239.
- Saxony, 250, 251.
- Scandinavians, the, 3.
- Schools, foundation of, 28.
- Secret National Government, 325-27.
- Sects, religious, in Poland, 90, 91.
- Sejmiki*, 62, 63.
- Semigallia, 96.
- Senate. *See* Diet.
- Seniority as basis of succession according to Slav custom, 20-22.
- Serfdom, of Polish peasants, 176; abolished, 221; restored, 231; abolished in theory in Duchy of Warsaw, 243, 271; abolished in Russia, 271; abolished in Posen, 277; abolished in Austria, 281; partly responsible for ruin of Poland, 302.
- Setch*, the, 129.
- Seven Years' War, 166, 187.
- Shuiski, Vassily, 133-35.
- Sicinski, 147.
- Sievers, Baron von, 227, 229, 231.
- Sigismund I, King of Poland, (1506-1548), 72; Governor of Silesia, 72; and the *szlachta*, 73, 74; financial improvements of, 74, 75; a champion of the towns, 75; religious tolerance of, 77; a lover of peace, 77; hostilities of, with Muscovy, 77-79; recognizes Duchy of Prussia, 80; his attitude toward the House of Habsburg and Bohemia and Hungary, 81-84; a staunch supporter of the rights of the Church, 87.
- Sigismund (II) Augustus, King of Poland (1548-1572), Poland and Lith-



- uania became single state under, xii; accession, 85; character, 85, 86; his marriage and the Diet, 86, 87; and the Nuncios, 87, 88; and the clergy, 90; favorable to the reformers, 93; a man of peace, 93; his reasons for allowing Protestant Church to be built in Cracow, 93; effects real union of Poland and Lithuania, 94; death, 98; forbade further settlement of Jews in Poland, 183.
- Sigismund (III) Vasa, Russian adventure of, xiv; elected King of Poland, 113-15; character and internal policy of, 115-17; foreign policy of, 117; Austrian intrigues and civil war of, 118-25; part taken by, in Russian domestic affairs, 134, 135; death, 137.
- Silesia, annexed to Poland, 8; reunited to Poland, 17; given to Wladislaus, 24; becomes known as German Province, 24; recent revival of Polish nationalism in, 24; held by Bohemia, 39, 46; Sigismund made Governor of, 72; New, 237.
- Skarga, foretells the fall of Poland, 185.
- Slavophiles, 263, 264.
- Slavs, in second century, 1; flee before Avars in seventh century, 2; Western and Eastern, 2, 3, *see* Poles, Russians; of north and south separated, 2; Germany the abiding danger to independence of, 8; institution of the district among, 12; *Drang nach Osten* at the expense of, 285; expelled from Prussian Poland, 288; influence of the German Empire a danger for, 304. *See* Pan-Slavism.
- Smolensk, 80, 136, 138, 143, 147.
- Sobieski, John, King of Poland, fights the Cossacks and the Turks, xiv, 151, 152; elected king 152. *See* John III.
- Society of Jesus in Poland, 92.
- Socinians, 91.
- South Prussia, 227.
- Spanish Succession, War of the, 156.
- Stanislaus, Bishop of Cracow, 16.
- Stanislaus (Augustus Poniatowski), put forward by Russia and Prussia as King of Poland, 189; education and character, 190; at the Court of St. Petersburg, 191; lover of Catharine, 191; Polish Ambassador at St. Petersburg, 191; in Russian conspiracy, 191, 192; elected King, 194; position of, as King, 194, 195; weakness of, 196; twice yields to the Empress, 196, 197; convokes Diet that agrees to first partition of Poland, 203; works for reforms, 208; supports dependence on Russia, 208; approves alliance with Russia, 210; supports the new Constitution, 220; appointed Commander-in-Chief, 224; advises acceptance of Catharine's terms, 226; his excuse for acceding to Confederation of Targowica, 228; in the insurrection of 1794, 233, 234; goes to Grodno, and then to St. Petersburg, 236; abdicates, 237.
- Stanislaus Leszczyński, King of Poland, 156, 157, 161, 162, 176.

- Statutes of Nieszawa (1454), 62.
- Stephen (1575-1586), words of, quoted, xiv; elected King of Poland, 103; qualifications of, 104, 105; defeats Muscovites, 106, 107; his army, 107, 108; triumphal return of, 108; his great European scheme, 108, 109; death, 109; and the Zborowski family, 109, 110; a great ruler, 111; tolerant in religious matters, 111; brought the Cossacks into the army, 128.
- Stephen, Archduke Charles, 326.
- Steppe, the, 81, 82, 84.
- Stolypin, Prime Minister, 318, 319.
- Strong places, 13.
- Stuhmsdorf, Truce of (1635), 139.
- Succession, seniority as basis of, according to Slav custom, 20-22.
- Suleiman II, 81.
- Suvároff, Russian general, 235.
- Sventopolk, 34, 35.
- Sviatopolk, son-in-law of Boleslaus I, 8.
- Sweden, in 1559 (Treaties of Wilna), 96; and the throne of Poland (1587), 114, 115; defeated at Kirkholm, 126; and Shuiski, 134; invades Livonia under Gustavus Adolphus, 136; returns Livonia to Poland, 139; invades Poland under Charles X, 143; in the Thirteen Years' War, 146, 147; in the Great Northern War, 156, 157.
- Szlachta* (landed nobility), and *kmeten*, 11; served on horseback, 11; depression of, 32; had voice in government, but not eligible to Senate, 40, 41; and the Statutes of Nieszawa, 62; and the Dietines, 63; John Albert and, 66-69; since Diet of Chenciny had theoretical right to sit with Senate, 67; become a class apart, holding the other classes in subjection, 67, 68; force Articles of Mielnica on King Alexander, 71; victory of, over Sigismund I, 73, 74; try to exclude deputies of towns from Diet, 75; army inefficient owing to control of, 79; try to bring clergy under their control, 87, 89, 90; King to be elected by, 99; peaceful sentiment of, 104, 105, 108; lack of responsibility of, 109; support Zamoy-ski, 118, 119; struggle between King Stephen and, 120, 121; their dangerous policy toward the Cossacks, 130; Wladislaus IV plans blow at, 139; secure election of Michael, 150; would not pay foreign ambassadors, 163; blind to the interests of the country, 168, 169; really very weak, 170; a section of, not well-to-do, 174; rank of, always recognized, 175; legislate against the towns, 178; opposed to the Jews, 183, 184; privileges of, reënacted after second partition, 231; of the "Red" party, 258; much land in hands of, in 1914, 298. *See* Nobles.
- Tannenberg, battle of (1410), xii, 55.
- Targowica, Confederation of (1792), 223, 225, 228.
- Tarnapol, province of, 251.

- Tarnowski, John, 81, 82, 86.
- Tartars, under Batu, 30; combine with Turks, 65, 70; Crimean, subjugation of, by Turks, 81; and the Ukraine, 82, 84; in time of Stephen, 104-06; warfare with, under Sigismund Vasa, 126, 127, 131.
- Teutonic Knights, struggle of Poland with, x, xii; settle in Masovia, 33, 36; origin of, 36; conquests of, 37; become serious menace to Polish independence, 37; defeated by King Wladislaus, 42; in possession of Pomerania, 46; treaty with Casimir III, 46; intrigues of, to prevent union of Poland and Lithuania, 51, 52; defeated at Grünwald, or Tannenberg, 55; at Peace of Thorn (1411), 55; war of, with the Prussian League and Casimir IV, 60, 61; rule over East Prussia, 61; under Albert of Hohenzollern, 70, 71; hostility to Poland under Sigismund I, 79; secularization of property of, 80.
- Theodore, Czar of Russia, 132.
- "Thief of Tushino, The," 133, 134.
- Thirteen Years' War, the, 146, 147.
- Thirty Years' War, 136, 138, 160.
- Thorn, Peace of (1411), 55; Peace of (1466), 61, 95; coveted by Prussia, 213, 217, 218, 222; obtained by Prussia by second partition, 227.
- Towns of Poland, deputies from, at first sat with Nuncios in the Diet, 67, 75; the Jagiellos the friends of, 75; from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, 178, 179; increased in importance after first partition, 206.
- Transylvania, Prince of, 123, 125, 143, 154.
- Trebbia, battle of (1799), 241.
- Triple Alliance, formed by Pitt, 216-18.
- Turks, defeated by Wladislaus III, 59; capture Constantinople, 64; defeat John Albert, 70; ravage Poland, 70; hostility of, to Poland under Sigismund I, 79-81; subdue Crimean Tartars and Moldavia, 81; advance to walls of Vienna, 81; in time of Stephen, 105; Stephen makes temporary peace with, 106; warfare with, under Sigismund Vasa, 126, 127, 131, 132; war with, under Michael, 151; Vienna freed from, 153-55; at war with Russia, 199-201; make treaty of peace with Russia, 218.
- "Tushino, The Thief of," 133, 134.
- Ukraine, the, meaning of, 82, 127; subject to Tartar raids, 82, 84, 127, 147; location of, 82, 127; joins with Russia, 131; vast estates of nobles in, 140; the serfs of, 142; Turks secure a part of, 151, 152; falls to Russia by second partition, 227.
- Ukranian question, the, 307, 311-16, 321.
- Unanimity voting, 122, 123.
- Uniate Church, the, 57, 66, 121, 297, 312, 314, 321.
- Union of Florence (1434), 57, 121.
- Union of Horodlo (1414), 56.

- Union of Lublin (1569), 94.  
Unitarians, 91.
- Varangians, built up first Russian state, 3.
- Varna, 59.
- Vasa, John, Duke of Finland, 96, 97.
- Vasa, Sigismund, 113. *See* Sigismund Vasa.
- Vasily III, Czar, 79.
- Venice, 140, 154.
- Veto power in Polish Diet, xiii, 147, 189, 192, 196, 211, 221, 230.
- Vienna, 81; rescued from the Turks, 153-55; Treaty of (1809), 242; Congress of (1814), 250-53.
- Vikings on Baltic coast, 4.
- Vistula, the, 284, 285.
- Vladimir the Great, 8.
- Volhynia, 55, 227, 237.
- Waclaw, 38, 39.
- Waldensians, 91.
- Wallachia, 126, 201.
- Warsaw, in the fourteenth century, 42; made capital of united Lithuanian-Polish state, 95; in the eighteenth century, 179; increase of size of, after first partition, 206; uprising in, after second partition, 233; entered by Russians, 235; falls to Prussia at third partition, 237; Duchy of, 242-46, 251; University of, closed, 264.
- Wartha, the, 4.
- Wehlau, Treaty of (1657), 145, 146.
- West Galicia, 311.
- West Prussia, 136, 145, 202.
- Westphalia, Treaties of, 160.
- White Russia, 202, 227.
- "Whites" and "Reds," 258, 268, 276.
- Wieliczka, salt mines of, 145.
- Wielpolski, Marquis, 273, 275, 300.
- William of Habsburg, 57.
- Williams, Sir Charles Hanbury, 191.
- Wilna, Compact of (1401), 55; Treaties of (1559), 96; taken by the Muscovites, 143; expels Russian garrison, 233; University of, 248; University of, closed, 264.
- Wisniowiecki, Adam, 133.
- Wisniowiecki, Jeremiah, 150.
- Wisniowiecki, Michael, King of Poland, 150-52.
- Witowt of Lithuania, 51, 52, 55, 56.
- Wladislaus (called Lokietek or "Long-Span"), King of Poland (1319-1333), 22; becomes king, 38, 39; reunites Poland into single sovereignty, 39; internal regeneration of Poland under, 39, 40; calls first Polish Diet, 40; defeats Teutonic Knights, 42; death, 45, 46.
- Wladislaus II, King of Poland. *See* Jagiello.
- Wladislaus III, King of Poland (1434-1444), 59.
- Wladislaus IV, King of Poland (1632-1648), attempt to seat him on the Muscovite throne, 135, 137; war of, with Muscovy, 138; makes peace with Turks, 138; attempts to destroy power of the Diet, 139, 140; death, 140.
- Wladislaus, son of Boleslaus III, King of Poland, 18, 22-24; line of, 24, 25.
- Wladislaus, son of Casimir III and King of Bohemia, 64; elected King of Hungary, 65; daughter of, married to Ferdinand of Habsburg, 82.

- Wladislaus Herman, ruler of Poland, 17.
- Zakrezewsky, 236.
- Zamoyski, Count Andrew, 270.
- Zamoyski, John, 99, 110-15, 118-22, 126.
- Zapolsk, Truce of (1582), 108.
- Zapolya, John, 83.
- Zaporoghian Cossacks, 129.
- Zborowski, Christopher, 110.
- Zborowski, Samuel, 109, 110.
- Zborowskis, the, 100, 109-14.
- Zealots, the, 228, 229.
- Zebrzydowski, 122, 123.
- Zolkiewski, 126, 131, 135.

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